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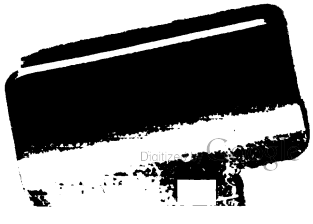

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Barbara Markham.

A NOVEL.

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Barbara Markham;

OR,

THE PROFLIGATE REQUITED.

A NOVEL.

2/1

" —— Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree,
" Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
" Of dragon-watch with uninchanted eye,
" To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
" From the rash hand of bold incontinence."

MILTON.

VOLUME I.

London:

Printed by the PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY, St. George's-Fields,
For W. J. and J. RICHARDSON, Royal Exchange;
AND
VERNOR and HOOD, Poultry.

1803.

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DEDICATION.

TO HER GRACE

THE

DUCHESS OF BEDFORD.

MADAM,

INDEPENDENT of your high birth and the splendid rank which your recent elevation adorns, your taste for literature and the liberality of your polished mind are strong inducements

884949

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with an author to solicit the honor of your patronage.

If the Duchess of BEDFORD, whose personal charms and elegant acquirements are the present theme of universal admiration, deigns by her beneficent smiles to indicate an approval of the work thus laid at her feet, her gracious condescension will do more to encourage a practice of the morality it inculcates, and to render unfashionable the prevailing follies and vices it condemns, than would be effected by the efforts of the Muse alone, though every page of the production elicited sparks of genius, wit, sentiment, and satire.

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The heroine of the tale is very deficient in the recommendations which are derivable from the beauty of Venus, the meekness of her doves, and the ten thousand celestial charms which are so abundantly at the novelist's disposal; but it is presumed that some interest at least will be found to arise from her conduct in situations which required all the address of her own, as well as the fortitude and ordinary qualifications of the other sex.

In the formation of your GRACE's character, a disposition to enjoy the innocent pleasures of elegant society is happily blended with the prudence which discountenances the levities that

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offend, the follies that discredit, and the vices that degrade some refined circles where they are unhappily now become constant guests. So far from your GRACE's being displeased by the application of the merited severity herein levelled at them, you will applaud the chastisement which tends to depress the frivolity and curb the licentiousness with which the manners of high life are now adays so strongly tinctured.

Such are the impressions with which BARBARA MARKHAM is presented to your GRACE for protection. Her numerous imperfections will afford scope for the exercise of all your

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GRACE's indulgence; but, though liberal criticism should find in every page a blot, or a provocation to place one there, the terrors that are created by a consciousness of many and great defects, will be somewhat soothed by recollecting that the judgment will be slow to condemn the venial errors of a first attempt, in consideration of its aim to expose the deformities of vice and to hold up to admiration that virtue which is as congenial with the purity of your GRACE's mind, as it is essential to the regulation, if not to the permanent existence of polished society.

That the future happiness of your

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GRACE's life may be commensurate with the admiration so deservedly bestowed upon you by all ranks of people, whose common feeling is that of delight and joy on the interesting event of your recent nuptials, is the fervent prayer of

Your GRACE's

Most faithful

And most devoted servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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BARBARA MARKHAM.

CHAP. I.

SOME ACCOUNT OF BARBARA'S FAMILY.

MR. Markham, on the death of his father, who was a merchant of great respectability, succeeded to a good capital, extensive connexions, a highly established credit and the most flattering prospects.

His property was considerably encreased by an advantageous marriage, and after the successful exertions of near forty years, the death of an only son induced him to withdraw altogether from business.

He purchased an estate a hundred miles from the capital, and retired to it with a determination to pass the remainder of his days

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

in that sort of undisturbed tranquillity, which the eternal round of bustle, peculiar to a town life, does not allow to many who are within its vortex.

He had two daughters. Miss Markham was several years older than her sister Barbara, and her attractions had occasioned no small contention among the aspiring sons of some wealthy citizens, who were within the circle of their visiting acquaintances. She did not owe their admiration to the lustre of her eyes; to the bewitching smile which makes loveliness irresistable, nor to the display of those graces which flow from a happy combination of natural charms with the acquired embellishments of modern education.

To such recommendations Miss Markham set up no claim. She was not blind to the inexpressive character of her countenance, or the inelegant form of her person; and her good sense dictated to her the inutility of bestowing upon such unpromising materials,

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that pains which might be applied with so much more hope of success to the improvement of her mind.

She was not wholly inattentive to external appearances; her manners were those of a gentlewoman; but for the fantastic accomplishments which convert the sex into an order of beings at which nature sickens, and a good taste is disgusted, she entertained the most unqualified contempt.

To the paucity of her personal charms and acquirements, as well as to the polish with which she had adorned her excellent understanding, her suitors were equally indifferent. The fortune which was destined to accompany her hand, acted with a Promethian influence upon her person; it transformed her into a creature the most fascinating, and, like the enchanted mirror, reflected her form to them, as abounding in beauty and in grace as is that of the Medecian goddess.

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Disdaining to encourage addresses which were the offspring of motives so base, and shrinking within herself, rather than seeking the chance of more acceptable offers in a wider circle, she devoted herself to the cultivation of her mind; declared her resolution never to marry, and derived her most gratifying reflections from the idea of making her acquirements beneficial to her younger sister, of whose education she became the sole and most attentive superintendant.

Barbara Markham, if not the handsomest, was certainly one of the most engaging and the most interesting of her sex. Her face, though not formed of such a regular set of features as a painter would study for a perfect beauty, was such as no man of taste and feeling could contemplate without admiration. The expression of her countenance was wonderfully fine, and the variety it was capable of, cannot be imagined by those who have not seen her.

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Emotion of any sort kindled in her countenance so lively a display of the sentiment which gave birth to it; pourtrayed so finely the internal workings of her soul; gave to pity so much softness, to anger so much animation, and to affection so much tenderness, that the most enthusiastic admirers of perfect beauty alone, never failed to see in her countenance and the *toute ensemble* of her person and deportment, a decided superiority.

Her stature promised to be above the mediocrity which prejudice assigns for the standard of female altitude; but she was well proportioned. Nothing could be more correct than the symmetry of her form, more graceful than her mien, or more sweetly impressive than her manners.

She had no rivals, for she had no equals. Her mind was stored with various information. Instead of descending to the light reading, and superficial acquirements which

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young ladies usually perfer, she sought after and earnestly studied such works, and delighted in such pursuits, as were best calculated to make her vigorous mind familiar with the human character.

She made herself well acquainted with the propensities and habits of both sexes; and though she had but very slender opportunities of being an actual looker on in the various scenes of life, she was not a stranger to their progress in all their various stages.

Of music, she knew and practiced enough to amuse herself and her friends, without sacrificing to it too much of that time, which, under her sister's guidance, was capable of being otherwise employed to more advantage.

She danced gracefully. She was a perfect mistress of the French language, and had acquired such a fluency and so correct a pronunciation, during a residence at Brussels,

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Spa, and other places on the Continent, with an aunt whom she accompanied there, that natives of France would converse with her as with a Frenchwoman, and not question her being such in reality.

She was an excellent horsewoman, and preferred riding the most spirited that could be procured: the most unmanageable to others, found in her what Bucephalus found in Alexander, and her delight was to experience, as he had done, the gracious and winning submission with which those noble animals yield to the superiority which masters them by a skilfulness of management, in which the unqualified severity so generally practiced, forms no ingredient.

Her sedentary employment in the study at one period, engaged so much of her time, that she could not be prevailed upon to take that air and exercise which was necessary to the preservation of her health.

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To diminish the growing effects of this evil, her sister conceived the idea of introducing an exercise which is exclusively resorted to as an accomplishment for the other sex only; though to the human frame of either it cannot fail to be highly beneficial.

Fencing gives to the male sex, an acquirement that is necessary to the accomplishment of a gentleman; to the female sex it is in that point of view odious; but, as an exercise merely, and nothing more, it ought not to be so entirely exploded as it is. Some females indeed are too delicately formed to be capable of the exertion it requires; but where nature has given a good stamina, a graceful form, activity of body, and that portion of fine animal spirit which characterizes a great part of the sex, no exercise whatever can be so productive of health and a fine deportment. It expands the chest, gives a free and an unembarrassed air to the figure, and contributes infinitely to the acquirement of an easy carriage.

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The novelty of such an opinion to many, may perhaps cause it to be ridiculed as preposterous; but it is in proof, that the practice was once sanctioned by several families, who were as distinguished for the propriety with which they trained up their daughters, as they were for their elevated rank.

Mrs. Thompson, an actress of some celebrity at Covent Garden Theatre, about twenty years ago, was the daughter of a foreigner who taught fencing and dancing. She made her a proficient in both, and she taught both to scholars of her own sex.

The objections to a young lady's receiving instructions in this art from a fencing master, are insurmountable; but the want of a professional adept of the other sex is much to be regretted.

It was as a promoter of health only, that Miss Markham recommended it to her sister, when her attachment to study threaten-

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ed her with serious consequences from a want of exercise. Her skill in the art soon made her fond of it, and she became such a proficient in time, as to be more than equal to her teacher; but of every acquirement beyond the ordinary attainments of her sex, the world, and even her most intimate acquaintances (her sister only excepted) were perfectly ignorant.

She possessed the talent of imitation and mimickry, to an uncommon degree of excellence, and could even, without changing her dress, so completely throw off the semblance of herself, as to pass in a mixed company for a stranger, among her intimate friends.

There was such a flexibility in the muscles of her face, and she had such a power of giving an entirely new character to the expression of her eyes, by a trifling cast in them, which she could easily effect, by narrowing a little the natural distance of the upper and lower lids; by a contraction of the brows,

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and a gentle inclination of her whole figure (which was at other times very erect), as presented altogether a creature that no one could suspect to be Barbara Markham.

Among the various extraordinary powers she possessed, none excited more surprize then the complete change she could give to her tone of voice*, manner of utterance, mode of accenting her words, and every particular that constitutes the difference between the conversation of one person and another.

She sustained at a masquerade once the double character of an English lady and a French gentleman. One half of her figure

*J. J. Rousseau, in his Confessions, produces a singular instance of this kind, in the person of M. Simon, chief justice of Annecy, in Savoy. He had two voices, one of which was sonorous and deep; the other acute and piercing. When he expressed himself with deliberation and gravity, he spoke in his bass voice, but when a little animated, his voice became as shrill as the whistle of a key.

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wore the lady's attire, and the other half the gentleman's. One half of her face was a beautiful white and red, with nature's own sweet penciling of the eye-brow, and teeth of purest ivory, set off by a pair of the prettiest, pouting, love provoking lips that ever were beheld; the other half was of a sallow complexion, a broad black brow, teeth of mahogany, and every thing else corresponding. The silver tones of her natural treble voice, when accosting those on the one hand as an English lady, overcome by the importunities of an officious French *petit maître*, from whom she could not disengage herself; was a curious contrast on the other hand, to the assumed tenor in which she delivered the French language in all its purity, or in broken English, as she chose to vary it; sometimes vindicating his unalterable attachment to the lady, on the ground of its being his duty, as a protector, whose claims to that honor were indisputable, on account of an alliance by blood, and sometimes as a lover, whose heart had so

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long been in her keeping, that they were literally one: in short, such was her varied and uncommon excellence in sustaining this very eccentric character, that it was universally pronounced to be beyond all comparison, the most entertaining though the most difficult, the best imagined, and the most perfectly supported of any that had appeared since the revival of masquerades in this country.

Mrs. Markham, sensible of her eldest daughter's qualifications for the important task of superintending and directing Barbara's education, wisely left it to her entirely.

The old lady had an abundant supply of the negative virtues, which made her pass for a very good kind of woman; she had at least as much gossip, and as much disposition to cultivate that talent as any of her neighbours; with common sense enough at the same time, to prevent her loquacity from procuring trou-

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ble to herself, or uneasiness to her acquaintances.

She contemplated nothing with so much delight as the figure she should be enabled to cut as a disconsolate widow, if unhappily she should be doomed to the melancholy fate of surviving her dear Mr. Markham. Not but that she had some sore and grievous causes for regret. The natural placidity of her sweet temper would now and then be disturbed, by a recollection of what she had lost in consequence of Mr. Markham's declining the honor of knighthood, when he was sheriff of London; but a still more mortifying reflection arose from her own want of foresight, in having preferred him to her father's apprentice, who besides being a more personable man than Mr. Markham, had risen to equal opulence, and for his active and loyal exertions as a magistrate in very troublesome times, had been dignified with a baronetcy.

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Notwithstanding those drawbacks upon her enjoyment, time, and the impossibility of mending such matters by repining, had reconciled her so far to the untowardness of her fate, that she was getting on toward the vale of years with as much apparent resignation to the will of Providence, as most women of her turn of mind could have assumed, under the same circumstances.

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CHAP. II.

OLD MARKHAM RETIRES FROM BUSINESS.—HIS IMBECILITY, A WARNING TO AGE.—CHARACTER OF LESSINGHAM.—HIS FATE, A WARNING TO YOUTH.

"IF I were a king," said the cottager's boy, "I would swing upon a gate and eat fat bacon all my life long." Poor fellow! he knew no delight, no luxury beyond it. How ill qualified are we at one period of life, to judge of the course that it will be most for our happiness to pursue at another.

Mr. Markham, almost worn out and exhausted by too sedulous an attention to business, laid his account in deriving from retirement, a life of leisure, and the society of a few select and agreeable friends, all the enjoyment that a man in the decline of life was capable of. He, good soul! was far from suspecting that in him, retirement would beget melancholy, leisure become irksome; and that agreeable

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friends in a new neighbourhood, was, to a man of confined habits, and a particular way of thinking, not easily to be met with.

The pleasure and amusement which he derived from the novelty of his new situation, fled as soon as the place became familiar to him. Having no resources within himself, his life became a burthen to him.

To relieve the *ennui*, which began to be insupportable, and, unsuspicious of the imbecility which was growing upon him daily, he determined on taking an interest in the concerns of the world again; to speculate a little in the funds, and thus, without personally appearing on the scene of action, or resuming occupations which he had laid down with too much solemnity, to betake himself to again, his plan was, through the medium of his broker, to become a dabbler in the stocks, and so to keep alive daily hopes and daily expectations that should be fed by the arrival of every post, and once a-day at

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least, renew sensations which had contributed so much to his enjoyment through all the past part of his life.

Under these impressions, he conceived also an idea of turning to account an event which had lately afforded him some uneasiness. When he resigned his entire interest in trade to the person who had for several years been his partner, he recommended to his particular favor and patronage the only son of an old friend who had been unsuccessful in life.

When this youth was a boy, Mr. Markham had procured him an admission to Christ's Hospital; as soon as his school course was finished, he took him into his counting-house, where his behaviour for several years was so satisfactory, because it appeared to be so correct, that when the old gentleman was about to retire, he would fain have prevailed on his partner to admit Lessingham to a small share of the concern. To this, however,

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the partner objected, and prior arrangements between them precluded Mr. Markham from urging the matter further, though he felt it as an affront that called for his decided resentment.

The young man, hurt at being so rejected, could not conceal his chagrin. Respect for his superior degenerated into dislike; mutual coolness led to mutual disgust; and at length Mr. Markham's successor, without consulting or communicating with him on the subject, abruptly dismissed his *protégé*, for whom, as it was always his intention to do something handsome, he now determined to stand forward. He sent for him down to the country, and perceived in him a matured judgment, which, with his tried integrity, he thought entitled him to full confidence.

An ardent desire to be more largely engaged in the concerns of life, prompted him to make this young man the instrument and agent of extensive transactions. With a view

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of making him more zealous in his endeavours, Mr. Markham admitted him as a partner to a small share of the profits which he expected to derive from the application of a considerable part of his property to speculations, not only in the stocks, but in the underwriting line also. Success in the outset encreased Mr. Markham's confidence in his well doing; and the profitable result of some very dashing, though dangerous adventures, blinded the old man to the imminent risk to which his fortune might be exposed by similar chances in the event of a failure. Avarice, so justly termed the vice of age, grew upon him apace, and flattered with the prospect of immense gain, his discretion forsook him entirely, and he became insensible to the equal probability of ruinous losses.

To avoid the repetition of some injurious interruptions, caused by occasional fits of the gout, which prevented Mr. Markham's being advised with now and then, at a crisis of great moment, he possessed Lessingham of

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a letter of attorney, which gave an unlimited power over his fortune, the whole of which was vested in the funds, except the estate on which he resided, and that consisted only of a hundred acres, round the mansion house.

The cell of a hermit is not more remote from the means of acquiring a knowledge of the world, than is the counting-house to a plodding merchant. Markham, after so many years spent in the centre of a scene, which in his narrow mind comprised all that was worth knowing, knew no more of mankind, than a monk does of modern manners.

He estimated men according to the credit they sustained on the Royal Exchange, and those he ever considered as the best, whose bills would command the readiest discount at the Bank of England. Beyond that sphere he had no desire to be informed.

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His opinion of the people about him was determined by the punctuality of their attendance at the desk, and the regularity of their official conduct. The generous hearted youth, who possessed a thousand good properties, but came to his station a quarter of an hour after his time, or was known to be out of his bed after ten o'clock at night, was pronounced to be unworthy of present favor, and incapable of future good; whilst the cunning hypocrite who paid a strict attention to those cardinal points, might be training himself by slow degrees for every species of worthlessness and knavery, without forfeiting any of that valuable opinion which is so frequently the foundation of success in life.

So it was with Lessingham. With consummate address and duplicity he had imposed upon his master's credulity, and under the specious mask of counting-house correctness, he contrived to conceal a most accomplished scoundrel.

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When his master did not sleep at a country-house, which he had a little way from town, Lessingham never failed to send up word at ten o'clock, that he was going to bed, if Mr. Markham had no farther commands for him; and the moment after, he sallied forth to the enjoyment of nocturnal revels.

His skill at play supplied him with money, and the necessity of being sober whilst at play, habituated him to a general abstinence from wine; but that was almost the only species of debauchery he did not give into.

It was some insight into his real character and conduct that induced Mr. Markham's partner to decline being connected with him, though he concealed from his patron the reason, lest it should deprive the unthinking youth of a friend at some future moment of need, which threatened to be fast approaching; and the abruptness of his dismissal soon after, proceeded from such a discovery

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of his habits and associates, as made it no longer safe to retain him.

The distance which Mr. Markam and his late partner were thown from each other, by the resentment which the former manifested at the unexpected and ungracious refusal of the latter, to admit Lessingham to a small share of the concern, without assigning any reason, had led to an entire dissolution of all friendship and correspondence between them.

Mr. Markham's hurt feelings prepared him to receive, without hesitation, the most aggravated impression that Lessingham thought proper to give of his subsequent degradation; and the former partner considering himself ill treated by the hastiness of Markham's conclusions, and the excess of his anger, under circumstances that he thought should have rescued him from the suspicion of being actuated by an unworthy motive, stubbornly resolved to let his justifi-

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cation rest on the future display of Lessingham's unworthiness, without any idea that his concealment would prove injurious to his friend.

The rapidity with which Lessingham ran through the property, of which he had by a variety of concurring circumstances obtained so unrestricted a controul, is without parellel.

The moment he was in full possession of the reins, away the coursers flew. Giddy as Phæton himself, and like him unequal to the task he had undertaken, all power of direction was lost; his adverse fate hurled him in an instant as it were to a depth of ruin and of ignomy, which led to immediate despair, and an act of suicide terminated his wretched existence.

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CHAP. III.

BARBARA'S BEHAVIOUR TO HER SUITORS, A LESSON TO YOUNG LADIES.—CHARLES FORTESCUE, A PATTTERN FOR YOUNG GENTLEMEN.—HIS FAREWELL ADVICE TO BARBARA, A MOTTO FOR MAIDEN'S GARTERS.

BARBARA Markham was at this time in the full prime of her youth. Her ripening charms were not to be contemplated without sensations of delight, too exquisite to be expressed. Admiration encreases with the attention that is bestowed on such master productions of the great Creator's hand. The impossibility of expressing the emotions that are so excited, imposes a silence on the tongue which, unrelieved by utterence, augments the glow of the sublime impression they make upon the soul.

She had been sought by many; and the involuntary sighs of many more who despaired

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of success in a struggle for which there were powerful as well as numerous competitors, evinced the willingness with which her chains were worn.

Too sincere for a coquet, she disdained the airs of pert and pretty misses, and declined the offers that were made her, with so much frankness, and so much grace, as to render enthusiastic the ardour of those who aspired to the possession of her, whilst it at the same time silenced their importunities. In terms too ingenuous to be mistaken, and too courteous to displease, uttered with an accent too decisive to be disputed, and too firm to be resisted, she plainly declared her heart was yet unsusceptible of those impressions which alone can justify a choice, which alone can guide it.

She laid it down as a maxim, that for a woman to encourage the addresses of a man who honourably tenders his heart, before she is able to ascertain that the sacred return

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it demands can be unequivocally made, is not only to risk a deception that may make his life an unhappy one; but, in the possible event of her heart's making a subsequent election for itself, would doom her to a remorse that could end only with her existance.

She was an admirable physiognomist. Her quick discernment, and her aptness at penetrating into the hidden motives of action, enabled her to discover, that the melancholy strain of one suitor, the plausible tone of another, and the affected disinterestedness of a third, sprang all from the same source; each had chosen the style and mode of expression that he thought himself best qualified to sustain; but there was not among the many who declared their passion; one whose heart was, in her opinion, influenced by the divine impulse of pure love.

One avariciously longed to be master of her fortune; another vainly wished to de-

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corate his mansion with the presence of the finest woman in the country; a third, piqued at a denial from an inferior fair, sought to inflame the envy of her who had rejected him, by procuring, if possible, a creature in every respect her superior.

True love is rarely the production of a moment. The excess of admiration, which is involuntarily excited by the presence of female loveliness, is a very rational foundation for the commencement of an ardent passion; but love at first sight, is not the love that is likely to be very lasting.

Among thousands of very sincere admirers, there may not be one whose heart is so truly susceptible of the tender passion, and who has drank so deeply of the delicious cup, as to sink under "the pangs of despised love", in the event of an ultimate disappointment.

When Barbara Markham qualified her re-

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jection of the suitors who did declare themselves, by intimating the possibility that her yet uninflamed heart, might subsequently make an election for itself, she was not aware of the inclination which that heart of hers actually entertained in favor of one who did not declare himself; one who had "never told his love."

She never suspected herself of so indecorous, so indelicate an error, as that of cherishing a secret partiality for a youth who was a daily observer of the throng of wooers that beset her, without manifesting the most distant inclination to enrol himself upon the list of candidates;—but so it was.

Charles Fortescue had romped with her for years together, quarrelled with her a thousand times, and refused to make it up again and again, without her often atoning, when he alone was to blame. When they were children, he broke more of her playthings than all the rest of her playfellows

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put together; and, when she no longer had playthings to break, he delighted in nothing so much as trying her temper, by tearing her frocks, inking her drawings, and teazing her perpetually by mischievous tricks of one kind or other: but notwithstanding the heavy debt, of civilities at least, which he had in this manner been contracting for years, he was the only young man, amongst a groupe of admirers, that approached her without uttering civil things of any sort or kind.

He had been some time on a visit there, and often made one of the family circle, when the merits of her several suitors were discussed. On these occasions, she could not avoid observing that Fortescue, who had been remarkable for a certain *gaieté de cœur*, which made him the life and delight of the company, sunk into a perfect automaton. If he spoke at all, it would be to vindicate some gentleman against whom an illiberal or severe insinuation had been levelled; or if

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the stroke could not be parried, he would call their attention to some good quality or other which the party possessed, and urge it as more than a counterbalance to the peculiarity objected to.

However liberal these interferences were, in behalf of the absent swains, Barbara never failed to observe, that it was the only task in which he exerted himself with a degree of effort that was obviously painful; and that in proportion as his arguments prevailed, he became himself discomfited.

If at any time she united with him in the defence of a lover whom her sister singled out for the object of her raillery, he would sink into silence on Barbara's interference, and manifest an utter inability to co-operate with her in his favor. His main object seemed to be to direct her preference to the most worthy; but he would change countenance at the least symptom of her partiality for any one of them.

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If in enumerating the claims of one of whom she expressed herself favorably, he imbibed the least persuasion of their forming an aggregate of merits that entitled him to her approval, the idea would act so powerfully upon his feelings as to oblige him to retire.

Obvious as these indications were, they were inexplicable to her. She could not suppose, for a moment, that he sighed on her account, because he had never uttered a single sentence that bespoke the existence of a partiality for her, in his bosom. The most rational conjecture she could form, was, that he ranked among a plurality of suitors for the favor of some other lady, and, that the part he took in the interests of her own lovers, was the effect of a sympathy for sufferers like himself.

This however, was a conclusion that afforded her no satisfaction, and yet she knew not why. She entertained the highest opinion of him, without suspecting that she

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thought little of particular merits that were pointed at in her professed admirers, for no other reason than because the same good qualities shone with infinitely more lustre in Charles Fortescue.

She sometime detected herself in an involuntary comparison between him and some one of those who laid claim to her heart; but that was a train of thinking she disapproved, as invidious; deeming the standard of his merits too severe a criterion to be made the test of any other man's good qualities.

Though it required no great skill in the art of divination, to pronounce upon this evidence, what was the prevailing propensity of both their hearts, yet, there was only one thing more completely out of her suspicion, than the rooted affection which Charles entertained for her, and that was the fast hold which he had got of her heart. Of that fact she had no idea. It was too inde-

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licate a supposition, for a feminine mind to cherish for a moment, besides, he who was upon such terms with her as admitted of his declaring himsely freely at any time, if it really were so, had never opened his lips upon the subject; and it was not within the scope of her comprehension that so chaste and correct a creature as Barbara Markham could "unsought be won."

Fortescue was a lieutenant in the army. His visit to the family was for the purpose of taking leave of them, previous to the departure of his regiment for the West Indies. He was a ward of Mr. Markham's, with little property beyond what the purchase of a commission, and the expenses of equipment required.

The day before the fatal news of Lessingham's conduct and suicide reached Mr. Markam's, an express messenger had arrived to order Fortescue to repair instantly to Torbay, where the fleet lay. Some unex-

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pected events had occured, which made it necessary for the troops to sail sooner than was intended; and his danger of being left behind was the greater, on account of an indispensable necessity he was under of returning first to London.

His parting with Barbara was necessarily abrupt, but very affecting. He told her that he felt himself unable to address her as he wished to do, but that he could not take a silent leave of her;—perhaps for ever!—An involuntary flow of tears here choaked his utterance; her soul melting in sweet sympathy at the same time.

After some pause, he resumed.—He said he must offer a few words on the critical situation in which she stood; surrounded by so many admirers, without appearing to be sufficiently alive to the merits of any one to give him a preference. His moments, he observed, were cruelly short, and his words must be few;—many words indeed, added he

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(taking her hand), are not necessary to express all I can venture to urge now. She drew his hand towards her; pressed it with fervour, and tenderly affected by the visible tremour that oppressed him, she beamed upon him a look so encouraging; so sweetly and so emphatically expressive of her wish to hear him speak with confidence whatever he had to impart, that he became instantly reassured, and proceeded without hesitation.

"It were presumptous in the extreme, were I to advise with a view of biassing your choice. Where discernment and judgment like yours are united, your best monitor will be found in your own bosom. Be advised by no one; but let this maxim be your guide:—Be slow to give your hand; nor give it ever, till first your heart has made its own election.

"My humble station, and the scanty proportion of fortune's favours, that has fallen to my lot, would render questionable the

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sincerity, and perhaps suspicious the motive of any admonitions I might offer respecting the deceptious allurements of title, rank, and wealth; I shall, therefore, be silent on that point, and close the advice I have to give, and which flows from the purest source of an unfeigned affection, with a repetition of the maxim I have already recommended. —Be slow to give your hand; nor give it ever, till first your heart has made its free election.—Farewell!"

As well as she could articulate, she replied,—"Oh Fortescue! Oh my brother!" "No!" said he, "be not so deceived, I charge you; my emotions are not those of a brother;—but more I dare not presume to say." He gave her an affectionate embrace, and retired.

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CHAP. IV.

LESSINGHAM'S ROAD TO RUIN.—WHY SOME PART OF A BRIDE'S FORTUNE SHOULD BE SECURED TO HER BEFORE MARRIAGE; AND WHY FATHERS SHOULD NOT NEGLECT TO SETTLE SOMETHING ON THEIR CHILDREN IN THE DAYS OF THEIR PROSPERITY, LEST UNFORESEEN ADVERSITY SHOULD INVOLVE THEM ALL IN A RUIN SO EASILY AVOIDED.—VARIOUS EFFECTS OF THE FAMILY CALAMITY; AND A HINT TO GIDDY GIRLS, NOT TO DISOBLIGE MAIDEN AUNTS.

THE whole of Mr. Markham's fortune was insufficient to satisfy the demands Lessingham had subjected it to. A very considerable part of it had been actually gambled away among blacklegs at the west end of the town. He had long been admitted as one of themselves by a set of sharpers, who affected a sort of demi character, and had address enough to pass in certain circles for men of some fashion.

Whilst he flattered himself with a per-

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suasion that they had fairly initiated, and fully instructed him in all the depths of their art, they had in fact concealed from him the more important secrets of it. They considered him as a pigeon of future promise; they calculated on the probable advantages he might in time derive from the favour in which he stood with his patron, and on that ground were more anxious even than himself, that his claims might not be enfeebled by the least laxity in his attendance on the counting-house.

There were times when his propensities would have betrayed him into a disregard of professional duties, if his associates, who reckoned on their own interest in his keeping well with his master, had not compelled his departure at an earlier hour than was agreeable to himself.

They frequently suggested to him the immense harvests that might be reaped, if they should even be able to command such a

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capital as would admit of their enticing on their prey, by large sacrifices on their own part in the first instance; and flushed with the idea of realizing these golden expectations, he was no sooner empowered to sell out as he pleased, than he apprised the gang of the arrival of the moment, and of the means which they had been so anxious for.

Of his speculations in the funds, and his underwriting transactions at Lloyd's, his share of profits, in the event of the most flattering success, he thought but little of; but in the more gainful commerce of cards and dice, he felt that as provider of the capital; he stood at the head of the firm, and should share with the rest, in as large proportions as Mr. Markham shared with him.

The pigeons they affected to have in their eye, and pointed out to him as young men of great wealth, were their own immediate confederates, and Lessingham himself was the only bird to be plucked.

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His losses in the alley were enormous, and they were greatly aggravated by the capture of some entire fleets, the policies of which bore his signature for very high proportions.

When the total amount of deficiency was ascertained, and it appeared that the whole of Mr. Markham's property was unequal to it, his remorse for the consequences to his family, co-operated so powerfully and so fatally with a fit of the gout, which had well nigh carried him off a short time before, that he fell an almost instant victim to the stroke.

His family became utterly destitute, for he had been so improvident as to neglect making any settlements, which on his wife's account was the more reprehensible, as her father in paying down her marriage portion, had indiscretely left it entirely to him, with a view he said of rescuing his young friend from the mortifications that had been entailed upon himself, by the airs which his own arrogant

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and high spirited dame had all her life long given herself, in consequence of a separate independance secured to her by a marriage settlement.

The shock, so fatal to the tranquility, the interests, and the hopes of the whole family, produced very different effects on the different individuals who composed it. The old lady's sorrows were not so much augmented by the sudden death of her husband, as by its complete derangement of that sumptuous funereal pageantry which she had long since planned against the arrival of the unhappy event, come when it would.

These plans had been revised and improved as often as every fresh attack of the gout afforded the least likelihood that the awful hour was approaching. The rooted and heart rending grief which she had determined upon, could only be manifested by the magnificent display she had designed, and her unfeigned regret at being obliged to re-

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linquish all those sad demonstrations of her inconsolable grief, repressed for a time every other consideration.

Miss Markham, on her own account, felt but little. Her scheme of life had long been settled, and it was so wisely planned, that as on one hand the smiles of fortune, however abundant, could add but very little to its improvement, so on the other it was equally proof against its frowns, however malignant. Her philosophic mind could find ample resources in her study to dissipate all the uneasiness that her share in the common loss of wealth could give birth to. It had been long since she owed any obligations to society, and as the seductive influence of riches would never have made her again a votary to its allurements, riches would have afforded her no pleasure beyond the solitary reflection of being the medium of its conveyance from those who preceded her, to those whom she might think best entitled to it after her decease.

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She foresaw that an asylum abounding in comforts, with every thing necessary to make life agreeable, would be gladly prepared for her mother as well as herself, by a maternal aunt who resided at a spacious old mansion within a few miles of London. This old lady had a great affection for them both, but without any rational cause, she entertained a dislike to Barbara, amounting almost to disgust.

Her aversion originated in the disregard with which the young hoyden treated her in her girlish days. Wild as a doe, she could not restrain herself within the narrow bounds of a decorum which some maiden aunts think it disrespectful to exceed: and where that sentiment is acted upon, an artfully obsequious girl, who scarcely ventures a smile in her presence, may demolish the entire contents of the china closet with more impunity, than her generous-hearted undissembling sister can let fall a cracked coffee cup. This sort of antipathy soon becomes

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mutual between the parties; and Barbara, hurt at a marked disapprobation which she never merited, disdained to make any efforts towards regaining an esteem she had done nothing to forfeit.

Miss Markham foresaw that the pride of poverty had now placed an insuperable bar in the way of Barbara's stooping to a reconciliation, and she trembled for the consequences. She looked round in vain for the prospect of such an invitation, as it was at all likely that her sister would accept. That many would become importunate for the gratification of accommodating her, there was no question; but she could no where trace a probability of its springing from a motive that would make it acceptable to so independent a spirit.

She regretted that Barbara had not availed herself of some one or other of the many good matches that had offered; and she lamented that the decisive tone of her refusals, had, especially under the present

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situation of affairs, rendered it highly improbable that any one of them would come forward with his solicitations again.

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CHAP. V.

A REJECTED SUITOR HUMANELY RENEWS HIS VOWS IN THE HOUR OF AFFLICTION AND ADVERSITY.—BARBARA, NOT KNOWING WHAT ELSE TO DO WITH HERSELF, PURSUES THE PLAN OF THE WRONGHEADS, AND PROJECTS A JOURNEY TO LONDON.

WHILST Miss Markham was ruminating on these distressful subjects, Mr. Bearcroft was announced. This gentleman had been one of her sister's suitors. He had a good estate in that part of the country, though he seldom resided there; was very forward in his assiduities on their first coming down, and not long after, made a formal declaration of his passion.

Barbara's rejection of him did not excite either her sister's surprize or disapprobation; for he was considerably older than her, though still in the prime of life, and his character was that of a dissipated man of

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pleasure and extravagance. He had run out a large property in the funds, and mortgaged all his estates in a short time after he became of age, but (as it was reported) his connexion with gamblers made him in time so great an adept, that he in his turn ruined several other young men in the same manner that he had been undone himself. With his nefarious gains he had paid off all his mortgages, and was understood to be a much richer man then than ever he had been before.

So abrupt a visit at a time so exceedingly unseasonable distressed her considerably. Mr. Bearcroft too well knew all points of etiquette not to be aware of the impropriety of such an intrusion, unless indeed he was urged to it by some very urgent cause that did not admit of delay. Concluding such must be the case, she ordered him to be shewn in.

After condoling with Miss Markham on the death of her father, and enquiring after

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her mother and sister, he proceeded to express the deepest concern for the situation into which the affairs of the family were said to be thrown by the ruinous conduct of Mr. Markham's partner. He hoped it was not true; or at any rate that the rumour greatly exaggerated the fact.

On that subject, Miss Markham replied, rumour could not exaggerate, for that large as her father's property was but a few months ago, the unconsumed remnant, was very far short of the demands upon it; consequently, for the family, there was literally nothing left.

"But Mrs. Markham's jointure no doubt was ample?" "No. No jointure had ever been executed." "But provision of some kind or other had surely been made in the days of Mr. Markham's prosperity, for individuals so dear to him as his children?" No." "What, destitute! Utterly destitute?" Utterly so," replied Miss Markham; adding

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at the same time, that her mother and herself indeed had a relation whose house would in future be their home.

"Well, madam—and Miss Barbara?—She too I should hope?"—"Sir!" exclaimed Miss Markham, "you press me very closely indeed, and very prematurely on points that discretion perhaps on my part, and good manners on yours, should induce us to be silent upon."

"If, madam," said he, "my motives did not abundantly justify me, I should indeed be distressed for an apology adequate to the apparent excess of my freedom; but I do most humbly entreat you to be persuaded, that when you shall know the direct tendency and the whole extent of my object in this visit,—premature no doubt, but necessarily so; you will not withhold from me your unqualified approbation, whether the end I have in view be within the scope of possibility or not."

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By a gentle inclination of her head, she intimated her readiness to listen to him, and he went on.

"You are no stranger, madam, to the honor I have aspired to, in respect to your sister. If my object in that attempt had been merely to effect a marriage of convenience on account of her fortune, the ill reception I met with, would once for all have terminated my endeavours. May I be pardoned if I add, that (whether the suspicion was just or not) I did attribute the peremptory style of her rejection to a belief on her part, that that was my motive. My feelings on the subject from that day to this, and the utter impossibility of subduing the passion she has inspired me with, has kept me incessently on the rack; tortured me every hour with a yet unfruitful anxiety to convince her that I am not so groveling a wretch as to profane the purity of her sweet person by approaching it upon a sordid principle. That gratification is now mine. If it be in the

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decrees of fate that I may yet obtain the honor of her hand; an honor I am if possible more desirous of now than when I first threw myself at her feet; my approaches to that felicity will at least be no longer subject to so degrading an opinion as that wealth is the attractive power by which I am influenced. I come not here, madam, to stipulate, or to make terms. My object is to entreat that I may be allowed to exercise the common rights of a neighbour, and that I may not be denied those of a friend, whose first duty it is to prove himself such in the moment of adversity. The instantaneous approach of this fatal calamity, not less than the weight of it, by which this amiable family is crushed, place you all in a situation similar to those who one moment are the apparent favorites of Providence, enjoying her best gifts in abundance, and the next, swept as it were from the face of the earth by a tremendous convulsion of nature. The survivors of such a wreck, are pointed out by God himself to the rest of the human

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species, as the sacred objects of especial care. I stand here, madam, the agent of Omnipotence, by whom I shall henceforth consider my cornucopia to have been filled, not so much for the enjoyment of a solitary individual like me, as for the relief of suffering mortality in the amiable mourners of this mansion. I am well aware, madam, of the unfitness of the time just now for a renewal of my vows to your sister, but if I may be honored with permission to manifest the extent of my dispositions in favor of her family; if my fond hopes are not again repressed, I shall be most happy instantly to enter on the duties of a relative, and to discharge them to any extent of pecuniary aid that ciscumstances require. Such, madam, being the purpose of my intrusion I trust I was not too sanguine in my anticipation of your pardon;—nay your approbation I hope will not be denied to me, and pray let the token be, the interference of your good offices with your angelic sister to honor me before my departure with an opportunity of confirming to her

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what I have with no less truth than ardour professed to you."

There was in this harangue something so imposing, and in the delivery of it something so like good intention, it was so apropos to poor Barbara's forlorn condition, and involved a question of so much real importance to her, that Miss Markham thought the least she could do was to let her determine for herself. Under this impression she told Mr. Bearcroft, that on her own part, and on her mother's part also, she felt herself obliged to make every acknowledgement gratitude could suggest, and not the less so, because she believed that they should stand in no need of what he so generously offered.

On the part of her sister, she said she did not feel herself qualified or authorized to speak. She was the sole mistress of her own will, her own actions, and her own sentiments. She must determine for herself as to an interview with him then, but the dis-

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tressed condition of her mind, and other considerations that would no doubt strike him as a reasonable cause for her declining that honor, made it most probable that she would at least postpone it to another day. However, she said, she would make her acquainted with what had passed between them, and send a servant to intimate to him her answer.

She then took a respectful leave of him and retired.

Whilst this conversation was going on, Barbara, who was ignorant of Mr. Bearcroft's arrival, had been taking a deliberate view of the situation of affairs, to the end of forming some resolutions as to what it might be most adviseable to do at this critical conjuncture.

She regretted nothing so much as that the unexpectedly sudden departure of Fortescue, should have deprived her of the counsel of

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the particular friend on whose judgment, foresight and disinterested opinion, she could place a firmer reliance, than on those of any other person whatever.

The probability of his setting sail without becoming at all acquainted with the real situation of things, was a most painful reflection to her. A recollection of what passed between them at their parting, applied to the rapid change of her condition so immediately after, almost overpowered her. The mutual tenderness they had indulged in at their farewell interview, she still considered as no other than the natural flow of affection in two sympathetic hearts, cordially attached, and cemented in bonds of unceasing amity, by the fraternal connexion that had subsisted between them from their earliest infancy. She had never for a moment thought of him as of a lover, notwithstanding the firmness with which she had unconsciously enthroned him in her heart, and the agitation, the tender emotion she had experienced, she

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thought would have been excited in any sympathetic bosom under the same circumstances.

His disdainful manner of rejecting the appellation of brother, did indeed appear to her somewhat enigmatical, and the solution had perplexed her a good deal, but she had at last settled the question to her entire satisfaction, by recollecting that between brothers and sisters there very often prevailed a kind of pettishness which became confirmed by their domestic familiarity and the uselessness of resentment. Those things do engender a kind of habitual indifference which takes from the fraternal character that strength of attachment, that nervous sentiment, that glow of affection which marks the fervor of friendships not so enfeebled, and on this principle she reconciled herself to what she at last considered as the true and intended meaning of an expression, she did not at first clearly comprehend.

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Just before her sister came in, she had conceived the idea of its being yet possible to see Fortescue, if she lost no time in pursuing him. The idea no sooner occurred, then her fruitful imagination followed it up with a thousand suggestions in favor of its probability. The order for so sudden a departure might be countermanded. The Colonel himself might be in town, and in that case, there was no question of his excusing his favorite Fortescue from a rigid compliance with the general order, and no doubt they would stay till the last moment, and then go down together.

These and many more as cogent reasons for her finding him in London, if she set off directly, determined her to pack up and begone without a moment's loss of time.

Unfortunately her maid was ill, or else, with her for a companion, she would have travelled all night; she therefore must submit to the necessity of sleeping on the road;

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but resolving to travel late, and on rising as soon as it was light, she reckoned upon not making that stop the cause of much interruption.

This arrangement and her extreme impatience to carry it into effect, were very unfavourable to Mr. Bearcroft's hopes of an interview, for independant of her having the worst opinion of him, grounded on good information of his conduct through life, she pronounced instantly on his having in view some concealed object or other, for which the specious pretence he had set up, was nothing more than a cloak.

To her excuses for not seeing him then, he returned a message amounting to little less than that he would not go away without an interview and her impatience to dismiss him previous to her own departure, determined her as the most certain, as well as the most speedy way of getting rid of him, to go to him at once.

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It can scarcely be expected under all the circumstances of the case, that such a girl as Barbara Markham would carry into his presence the most gracious dispositions to make the interview satisfactory to him.

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CHAP. VI.

BARBARA TREATS HER HUMANE LOVER WITH A SPECIMEN OF HER TALENTS FOR PLAIN DEALING.

SHE approached him with expressions of concern, that the benevolent object of his visit, which certainly levied large contributions on the gratitude of the family, had not been accompanied with a little more feeling for the situation into which they were thrown. To be forced so compulsively from a retirement which the melancholy event of her father's death rendered sacred, argued some very extraordinary occasion on his part, even more so than the humane intention communicated to her sister, for insisting as he did on an interview at so unseasonable a moment; and it was her desire to know what the imperious nature of that occasion could be, that had compelled her to violate, as she certainly did in attending him, the

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decencies, which both feeling and etiquette required her to pay a little more regard to.

He assured her the nature of the occasion was imperious in the highest degree. Considering as he did, that the situation of a family so cruelly circumstanced, required that some alleviations should be instantaneously administered, lest the shock should precipitate the victims of such aggravated calamity to desperation, he was incapable of shaping his conduct according to common place rules of action. His heart dictated to him a duty, which, if not discharged promptly, might be attempted too late to be efficacious.

"The most scrupulous advocate for decorum (added he) would not condemn the impatience which impelled a man to force a lady from her bed, when surrounded with flames, if her life was likely to be the price of his ill timed decency in waiting outside the door till she had dressed herself. Such, madam, is my defence, and your candour cannot but acquit me—nay, it will do more than pro-

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nounce a cold acquittal—it will not hesitate to——" " to pronounce that such a conduct grounded on such a motive, entitles the generous enterprize to all the thanks a grateful heart can pour forth; but surely, sir, my sister did not leave that duty unperformed?"

"No, madam;—for her mother as well as for herself, her acknowledgments were most ample; but on your part, she most emphatically declined to speak, and in pointed terms referred me to yourself. That reference, madam, renewed the hopes which brought me here; kindled afresh the ardency of my desire to be honoured with permission to manifest the sincerity of my professions, and it is to that I am indebted for this happy opportunity of addressing my solicitations to the individual whose transcendent claims have given my heart so deep an interest in the object of my intrusion."

Here she would fain have interrupted him, but he was not to be checked.

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"I conjure you, madam, by all the finer feelings of which your own heart is so susceptible, do not let the force of your own sufferings render you insensible to those of others. From the distracting effects of your former rejection, I perhaps should not have had the fortitude to seek relief, if the awful decrees of a Providence, whose views are concealed alike from all, had not in these recent manifestations of his will, opened as it were a new path to me. Let the hopes of that mercy for which you yourself, all perfect as you are, may one day be a petitioner, arrest the repetition of a sentence, which perhaps may now be ready for utterance, and allow to yourself a little further time to consider, whether the sentiments I am so urgent to offer, may not, ought not to rescue me from the insupportable torture of a second and still more fatal fiat."

Her indignation, enflamed by her thorough conviction of his hypocrisy, and her agita-

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tion excited by the acuteness of her feelings, deprived her of all power of speech.

She burst into tears, and reclined her head upon one hand which rested on the table, whilst the other hung down on the side by which he was seated.

He vainly attributed her emotion to a conflict which he flattered himself might after a few more glowing rhapsodies terminate in a revolution favorable to his hopes.

He threw himself upon his knee, and with an appropriate exclamation, at once seized and imprinted upon her hand a most impassionated kiss.

At the freedom of this action she started as from an electric shock, and tore her hand away with a violence and a dignity at the same time, that marked alike her resentment, and her contempt of him.

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"Insolent!" she exclaimed—"and have twenty years employed in the arts of seduction, instructed you no better in the vile trade of entrapping innocent hearts? Is it by such ill-mannered approaches that an accomplished hypocrite thinks to alarm into submission one whose soul abhors alike him and his insidious wiles."

"Madam!" he exclaimed with an air of astonishment.

"Come, come, sir! affect not I beseech you a surprize you do not, cannot feel. You *know* that I am informed, and from what authentic source I was most officiously made acquainted with the whole course of your immoral life; and knowing *that*, your audacity exceeds your hypocrisy, or you would never dare to wound the feelings of an honorable woman by inviting her to an alliance with so much baseness."

"Baseness! madam."

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"Incorrigible baseness! What other term, for sure there's none more vile, applies to you so fitly? Base and unmanly, sir, your conduct is. You take advantage of our defenceless state; our ruinous, our almost hopeless condition; you invade the house of many sorrows with the affectation of a sympathy to which your heart's a stranger. You prophane the all-wise dispensations of the heavenly power that crushes us, by impiously daring to convert the effects of his severity into a means of disturbing still further our repose. Your heart, sir, will not deny, though your tongue may, that your ostensible motive for this visit is a false one; that your real purpose is most dishonorable, and that you come here with the hope of adding one crime more to the black catalogue which your overcharged conscience has already to answer for."

"Are there then no instances, madam, of a rake's reforming? Do we not often see

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in those who were once the slaves of fashionable follies—?"

"Follies!"

"Vices if you please—the best of husbands and the best of men?"

"Your unrepented sins, sir, do not entitle you to the benefit of any argument that can be founded on the examples you allude to. With the feelings I entertain for the indignity which is meant to myself, I blend those which are roused by your notorious cruel treatment of others of my sex. If, sir, you meant to be thought sincere in your benevolent offers here, you would surely not have been so remiss in the discharge of similar duties elsewhere. The passing bell is even now tolling for the mother of one deluded victim, brought by your crime with sorrow to a premature grave; whilst the rest of her offspring weep round her corpse without a morsel of bread that is not pro-

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vided by charity;—a charity, sir, to which I know you have refused to add your mite, because her wailings gave publicity to your seduction of her child, who, abandoned by you, is now earning the wages of shame as a common prostitute. Before your offers of assistance here can be listened to, sir, there is more to be done by you in that way elsewhere, than can well be accomplished during the short period that we are likely to occupy a residence in this part of the country. For my freedom, I make no apology. It was called for by the occasion; it was provoked. I take my leave, with a fervent hope that the hour of your reformation may be at hand, and that you may embrace the melancholy opportunity I have apprised you of, to make some atonement; but your further visits, sir, or communications of any sort or kind henceforth, I beg leave to decline."

Having thus concluded the conversation, she withdrew.

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CHAP. VII.

THE EFFECTS OF BARBARA'S PLAIN DEALING WITH HER HUMANE LOVER, WHO GALLANTLY RESOLVES ON NOT SUFFERING HER TO GO ALL THE WAY TO LONDON ALONE.

ON any other than the most incorrigible of men, such a philippic would have had some effect; but Bearcroft, who next to the number of his seductions, prided himself on nothing so much as the skill with which he had in some instances surmounted almost invincible obstacles to the gratification of his will, no sooner perceived that his present mode of attack on Miss Barbara would be fruitless, than he began to consider, what, under such very discouraging circumstances, would be the next best course to take, and before her admonition was ended, he had actually determined what should be the preliminary step to the furtherance of his views upon her.

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When it is known that his diabolical fury of pursuit felt no remorse at offering to the poverty of a distressed parent a bribe so high, as to make him reckon on corrupting that parent's very nature, and on making her instrumental to the ruin of her own child, it will not be thought much of, that he should bid so roundly for a trusty spy in Mrs. Markham's family, as to secure to himself authentic information of every thing that was going on there.

Before he left the house he procured a piece of information, that opened new and very unexpected prospects to him all of a sudden; namely, that a chaise was sent for to the neighbouring town, to take Miss Barbara directly *toute seule* on her way to London; that she proposed travelling as far as ——— that night, and finishing her journey the next day.

This was an event so big with promise; so very inviting to a speedy, an almost in-

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stant accomplishment of hopes that he really had not reckoned upon perfecting for perhaps some months to come, that it threw him into a delirium of extacy, and scarcely left him master of so much sober reflection as was necessary to the arrangement of his plan.

He begged forgiveness a thousand and a thousand times of his tutelar genü for having prematurely concluded, that the influence which had given success to so many similar pursuits, was now about to be withdrawn.

With a mixture of gratitude and delight, he repeated over and over again the keen and cutting sentences which had flowed so recently from the pouting lips of the delicious babbler. In her most opprobrious epithets he discovered neither more nor less than unequivocal invitations to the shorter and so much better course which it conducted him to.

His depravity even persuaded him, after

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some consideration of circumstances, that she had preconcerted the whole of the plan which was to lead to the end he had in view; that she had artfully shaped her conversation with him so as to produce its certain effect; that the servant retained by him as a spy, had in that instance acted under her secret orders; and that like an honest free-hearted wench, she preferred the enjoyment of a rapturous *tête a tête*, to the unavailing sorrows that surrounded her.

The more he viewed things in this light, the more he was convinced it was so. No formal yielding on her part could have led to the point, either so immediately, or so consistently for her credit. Laid out as the plan now is, so wisely and so admirably by herself, she will come off with flying colours, and though the lover may shortly exclaim with Lotharia, "*I triumphed in my turn!*

"*In love I conquer'd!*"

she will exultingly reply, 'yes, but I had

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my triumph too, before your turn was come.' "And so she had, angelic soul! and heartily is she welcome to it."

As he passed along he amused himself with dilating on the proneness of woman to the frailty they affect so much to abhor; on their superior talents for intrigue, and for the management of an amour, when they have true generosity and honesty enough not to run counter to the dictates of nature. Strong, however, as his persuasion was, that this would turn out to be the case, he was not so indiscreet a general as to meet the opponent in the field without preconcerting such various plans of attack and manœuvre, as circumstances, in any event, might make it adviseable for him to adopt.

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CHAP. VIII.

MR. BEARCROFT'S EXTREME DELICACY IN SECRETLY TRAVELLING ON BEFORE BARBARA, FOR THE HUMANE PURPOSE OF GETTING EVERY THING PREPARED FOR HER RECEPTION, BEFORE HER ARRIVAL AT THE COUNTRY INN WHERE SHE WAS TO SLEEP THAT NIGHT.—THE SUCCESS OF HIS KIND ENDEAVOURS, AND FURTHER PLANS, WITH THE AID OF BETTY CHAMBERMAID FOR PREVENTING HER BEING OPPRESSED WITH *ENNUI* THE NEXT MORNING.

THE first thing to be done was to secure the start of her upon the road, and to reach the place of rendezvous in time to concert and settle all the previous arrangements before her arrival there.

The neighbouring town to which Barbara had sent for her post-chaise, lay on the road to London. He drove there directly, and meeting on the way her carriage with only a pair of horses, he was satisfied that in point

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obedience to orders, as to prevent the possibility of her supposing that the approach of her carriage had been observed by them. She told the lad to drive slowly through the town, and became a little composed.

There however was still one cause of apprehension remaining. Bearcroft might not be going home, and in that case there was imminent danger of her passing him on the road and being discovered.

Whilst she was ruminating on this probability, a further exercise of his diabolical precaution had the intended effect of dissipating all her fears. Her carriage was stopt by the waiter as it drove by the inn, to desire of the postboy that if he should happen to overtake 'Squire Bearcroft's post-chariot, he would tell him, that as his honor was going strait home to stay a few days, the horse he wished to try should be sent after him that afternoon, and left with him upon trial till the end of the week.

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The driver in reply, said, that there was no chance of his overtaking such a flying traveller as 'Squire Bearcroft at any rate, but especially as the lady had ordered him to drive slowly over the stones; adding as he moved away, that the squire would be off the turnpike-road before he should reach the stones end, and therefore the waiter might have spared himself the trouble of charging him with a message that could not be delivered.

She was so delighted with this welcome intelligence, that she stopt the chaise, called the waiter to the door of it, and under a pretence of being somewhat indebted to him for previous civilities, she slipt half-a-crown into his hand, and pursued her journey.

The gift was on her part the meed of gratitude, which is too often bestowed where the real claims of the receiver would be more justly recompenced with a halter.

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Profuseness is one of the characteristics of men habituated to Mr. Bearcroft's course of life, and the chambermaids of the inns they frequent, are so often found to be necessary instruments in carrying on their infernal plots, that none of the agents of iniquity get better paid than they do; especially when an occasion like the present calls for the full exercise of that intrigue which is held to be a necessary qualification for the station they occupy.

The fair wielder of the warming-pan at the house where Barbara was to sleep, was a perfect adept in all the secret services of her profession; had often experienced Mr. Bearcroft's liberality, and from the frequent opportunities she had of rendering him assistance, she never heard his arrival announced without counting her gains on the success of some new scheme of seduction in which she was to be a confederate.

Like a thorough mistress of her trade she

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saw to the full extent of the order, before the details were half gone through; nevertheless they rehearsed over and over again the part she was to act herself, as well as other parts assigned to subordinate agents, who were by her contrivance to be aiding and abetting, without suspecting that what they heard or what they saw, were any other than the accidental events of the moment when they occurred.

Mr. Bearcroft was conducted to his bedchamber a considerable time before the lady arrived, and in order that every one should know who it was that had got possession of that identical room, he had not retired many minutes before he appeared outside of the door, calling and bawling loud enough to attract the attention of the whole house. They thought the place was on fire, and every one hastened to the spot, which was conveniently situated to admit of its being viewed from all parts of the premises.

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It opened to a railed gallery which went all round the yard ; was directly opposite to the windows of the bar and of the kitchen, and was the furthest door but one on that side of the gallery.

Between that door and the entrance to the room beyond it, stood a partition door across the gallery, which had been long before fixed there as an additional security to those who might happen to occupy the furthest chamber.

To that partition door there was a key which the chambermaid was well known to deliver always to those who had the room which it enclosed, and it was her usual precaution to lock the partition door and deposit the key in the room.

In the event of their wanting any thing either after they had retired, or on ringing for her in the morning, there was a narrow stair-

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case by which she descended through the laundry, which enabled her to get to that part of the gallery, without its being necessary to unlock the door which stood across it.

To add to the warmth of this room by a more complete exclusion of the outer air, the gallery was boarded up from the floor to the cieling, all the way from the partition door to the end of the gallery, whereby a close passage was formed, with a small window to admit the light.

After a volley of oaths addressed to the chambermaid, it appeared that he had accidentally put his candle out, and was in a terrible rage, because their neglecting to have a lamp burning, as was customary at one corner of the gallery, prevented his lighting it again.

Beside this intended shew of the room he was in, another end was answered; it excited the surprise of the family, that, as the

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enclosed apartment was unoccupied, Betty chambermaid had ventured to put Mr. Bearcroft in any other, knowing how partial he was to it, and how peremptory he always was in insisting upon it if disengaged.

To this Betty replied, that she could make neither heads nor tails of it, but that Mr. Bearcroft who was pure whimsical at times, had been bit by a maggot of some sort or other that made him choose number nine to night in preference to his own room, as he used to call number ten. Well! they all thought it very odd, because his own room was so much more comfortable; however, his candle being lighted as well as the lamp in the corner of the passage, which had been most unaccountably blown out by that common bearer of blame in all the families, Mr. Nobody, quiet was again restored.

Not long after this, Miss Barbara's chaise stopt at the gate, and the merit of Mrs. Betty's acting in the first scene, was to be dis-

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played in the adroitness with which the fair traveller was to be rescued from the chance of gathering from the loquaciousness of the landlady or the obliging communicativeness of the waiter, that her country neighbour, Mr. Bearcroft, was in the house.

It was not thought safe, nor would it have suited the other arrangements of the plan to warn them against giving her such an intimation, and Betty's tried talents entitled her to a reliance that left nothing to be apprehended on that head.

To make it impossible for her to be shewn into the parlour, Betty took care to meet with the terrible accident of letting fall a large glass jar of India pickle which broke into a thousand pieces, and diffused, not only over the parlour, but over all that part of the house, a stench that was intollerable.

The moment it happened, or at least as soon as possible after the first effects of the uproar it occasioned had a little subsided, Betty, who

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had got every thing ready to give effect to an order which she knew it must lead to, affected to be so overcome by the shocking mischief, as to be incapable of recollecting what it was her business to set about in consequence of it.

To gather up the fragments and clear the room was no affair of hers; that was the waiter's concern, and very happily furnished an abundance of well-timed employment for one who might otherwise stand very awkwardly in the way. To avoid incurring any suspicion of the motive she had for committing this nuisance, she stood stock still, doing her best in the way of fairly fighting out the battle of words with her enraged mistress, from whom she never failed on these occasions to provoke such a superfluous torrent of abuse as more than settled the account between them, and left the balance finally in Betty's favor.

After ringing all possible changes on the epithets generally applied on such occasions,

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the exhausted dame exclaimed, "Only look at her! do but look at her! only see how she stands there like a fool, as if there was nothing at all to do; as if her cursed giddiness that makes the house stink worse than an oil shop, had made no work at all for her own hands.—Where, you hussy, tell me where is any body to be shewn if a carriage was to drive up whilst we are in this stinking condition? Don't you know, you dirty slut you, that number ten is now the only decent room to shew company into, and that there is not a spark of fire there?"

This was what Betty was so anxiously waiting for; but to conceal her impatience, instead of flying, she tardily sneaked away, to do with the worst apparant grace, that which (speaking in her own language) she had been *all agog* to perform, during the whole of the lecture.

The step of the carriage was scarcely let down, before Betty, all attention, presented

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herself to the lady, who was so muffled up as to be unknown as she walked through the house in her way to number ten, where she was instantly conducted.

To prevent her being led into a gossip with the landlady, who was obsequiously stationed to receive her as she alighted, Betty with a more than ordinary exertion of her loquacity opened her battery of eloquence at the very moment of her approach, and kept up a constant discharge all the way to the very chamber door, describing the accident that rendered the parlour useless.

Scarcely waiting till the guest was seated, away she ran back, to prevent the probable approach of her mistress, whom however she found in her bar-chair in the act of fortifying herself by a cordial, against the effects of the flurry she had been thrown into.

To secure her charge against the aukward consequences that a civil visit from the

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landlady might produce, Betty, at the same time she informed her who it was, said she was quite overcome with fatigue, and had thrown herself upon the bed the moment she entered the room, requesting to be left alone for a quarter of an hour or so.

"I told her that I was sure, ma'am, the moment you knew who it was, that you would hurry up stairs to pay your respects; but she said on no account; by no means; tell your mistress, said she, I am not well enough to see or converse with any one to night, but in the morning shall be happy to receive her civilities, and to ask her how she does; but not to night."

Thus was the first scene gone through with all possible success. But Betty's part was not finished. She had some bye play to perform, which had been concerted between her and the squire, with a view of producing a pretty strong effect, and adding to the general interest of the drama.

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When the lady was gone to bed, and Betty had drawn the curtains, she carefully conveyed out of the room, the key of the partition door on the gallery, which she had a short time before as carefully committed to the lady's care, observing that her retreat would be by the narrow stair case and through the laundry; adding, "the string of the night bolt which fastens this room door is at the bed's head, ma'am, and by your loosening it with your hand when I have pulled the door to, it will be as fast as the door of the parish church."

As soon as the last services were rendered to the lady, away Betty crept silently to the gentleman, who had been all this while sitsing in the dark, impatient to know how these preliminary matters had gone on. When she had made her report of proceedings so far, it was agreed that before the next scene commenced, half an hour should be allowed to enable the lady, if so disposed, to get fast asleep; and as the plot now required

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as many performers as could well be got together, the ostler and postchaise boys were to be prevented from going to bed by Betty's recollecting that when the squire's passion was over, he had ordered them a bowl of punch to drink his health.

By the time the punch was made and nearly drank, the half hour was expired. Betty began the second scene by going into the yard and *happening* to meet with another accident, namely, the dropping into the draw-well, which stood in the middle of the yard, a parcel of linen which she had laid down on the side of it, in order to draw the bucket up.

Sadly terrified, she flew into the kitchen, and begged for the love of mercy that they would come directly and help her get the the things up; but as their making any great matter of noise, might disturb the gentlefolks in the gallery, they were to be as quiet as possible.

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When they were all assembled together round the well, as silent as so many resurrection men in the act of robbing a grave, Betty all of a sudden turned her face towards the gallery where the lady slept and cried in a kind of whisper, "hush! what's that?" at this they became muter still. "What's what?" whispered the ostler. "Hush!" said Betty again. "Hush!" said one of the postillions, "why what's the fool afraid of?" "Be quiet," said she, "I ben't afraid o'nothing, but I'm sure that I do know the creek o'the lock o'the partition-door, and I'll be sworn that I heard it unlock just now." "Well, and what o'that? suppose you did?" said another of the postillions. "Hush! be quiet! do!" said the ostler, who began now to have some notion of what was going forward.

At that moment, whilst they were all completely in the dark, with their eyes directed up to the place they were talking about, the feeble light of the lamp in the

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corner of the gallery, was just sufficient to enable them to perceive the figure of a man move out of the squire's room and turn through the partition-door towards the other. "Hush! hush! hush!" now they united to ejaculate in a whisper, and strained all their faculties to make out as much as possible of the mystery. "There," said Betty, "did not you hear the door of number 10 go?" "Yes, yes," "but hold your tongue can't you?" "Don't you hear the bolt i' the inside go," said Betty. "Yes, said one of the postillions." "No, I didn't hear that, said another." "Then I'll be d—d if I didn't," replied he, whose oracular powers were so much in unison with Betty's.

For some few seconds their great expectation was, that resistance, on the part of the person approached, would occasion considerable noise and uproar, but that not being the case, they soon pursuaded themselves that his entrance was unopposed; and had no doubt about its being a preconcerted in-

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trigue, so settled and arranged between the parties.

The concatination of ideas which then followed, betrayed them into so frolicksome a humour, that, as the only way of avoiding to be heard laugh out, they made the best of their way back to the kitchen, telling Betty, that was n't a time o'night to get clothes out of a well, and that they would take care and do it for her the first thing in the morning.

Primed, by the squire's punch, their libidinous jokes, at his expense also, became almost too gross even for Betty's exquisite delicacy. She however took care that they should not let her go till she had made them extort from her all the information the case admitted of;—such as, that the key of the partition-door was in Miss Barbara Markham's own possession, in her own room, number 10, and that squire Bearcroft could not get get through it from number 9, if she had not first of all got up, and opened the door of

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her own room next, and then turned the lock of the partition-door with her own hands.

" To be sure!" said the ostler, " and then went no doubt half naked as she was, and knock'd the poor squire up, and insisted on his leaving his warm bed afore a had half finished his first nap. Lord! Lord! Betty, what strainge onconscionable creatures you woman folk be, ninety-nine out of a hundred!"

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CHAP. IX.

THE SUCCESSFUL ISSUE OF THE EXPLOITS WHICH MR. BEARCROFT AND BETTY CHAMBERMAID CONCERTED OVERNIGHT, FOR THE SURPRIZE OF BARBARA NEXT MORNING.

WHEN Betty attended the lady's bell in the morning, notwithstanding all she had seen, she contrived to find every thing about the gallery and about the room, exactly as she had left it the overnight; and the night-bolt was no sooner lifted to let her in, than she contrived to see the key of the partition-door upon the mantel-shelf, where the lady herself had laid it down.

All that was very true; but it was all insufficient to enable her to recover the stroke which her delicacy had sustained in seeing what she had happened to see, and of which there were so many other witnesses besides herself.

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Betty, good soul! was too discreet, and felt too much for the character of her sex, to open her lips about the unhappy affair, but notwithstanding her forbearance, the tale rose with the lark, and was over the whole town before the lady was awake.

When Barbara ordered breakfast, she bespoke also a pair of horses to be got ready; but it so *happened*, that in consequence of the squire's travelling with four horses, and his having sent four forward, that they might not be detained at the next stage, there was not a pair left for the lady.

On her sending an expostulatory message to the mistress of the house, with a desire to see her, poor Betty returned "like Niobe, all tears." She held one corner of her stiff starched apron to her eyes, and approached the unconscious victim of so much infernal machination, with all the outward and visible signs of an inward and excessive grief.

"What's the matter, child?" said Barbara.

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Betty burst into a strong convulsive fit of weeping. "Tell me what has happened to you; or, if your sorrow is too great to admit of your speaking, perhaps you had better retire a little, and come back to me when you are somewhat recovered." "Oh, ma'am," replied the hypocritic fiend, apparently overwhelmed with distress, "it is nothing to me; nothing at all to me; 'tis on your account that I am so unhappy."

Barbara, naturally applying these words to the recent death of her father, and the calamitous situation of her family, which as it had been made no secret of, she not unreasonably concluded might have reached there, felt so grateful towards the girl for the apparent excess of her sorrow on her account, that she made her sit down, and endeavoured to alleviate her anguish with all possible tenderness.

Finding however from the manner in which Betty answered her, that she was al-

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together ignorant of those events, it became necessary to demand a plain explanation of what she really did mean.

At last, with a world of apologies for being the bearer of such a message, she said that her mistress ordered her to tell the lady, that "she might get horses where she could, for she should have none there if the stables were full; that the house was a house of character till she ruined it; but that the opposition house at t'other end of the town had already heard of the fine goings on here, and would so set it about as to make it impossible for any family of a good reputation ever to drive up to the gate again."

The first effect of this, was a firm persuasion that the poor girl was out of her mind. She bade her sit still, and was going to pull the bell, which Betty vehemently opposed, telling her that she would go fetch any thing she wanted, and do any thing she ordered her to do, but that if she did not

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wish unnecessarily and uselessly to draw down upon herself a torrent of abuse and insult, her best way whilst she staid there was, to avoid her mistress, as well every other person belonging to the house, for those of them who might not insult her with hard words, would only jeer and fleer and make sport of her; there not being a single creature under the roof that felt as she did, the terrible consequences to a lady of family like her to be found out. "To an insignificant thing of a chambermaid like myself (added she), its no great matter; next kin to nothing; we are better without a character than with one, as a body may say; but the case is different with your ladyship, and that's what grieves me so."

Unable any longer to listen to such incomprehensible nonsense, whether the girl was mad or not, she determined on one effort more, and if that did not succeed, to have up somebody else. With a tone of some authority, she told her, that either she

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was or she was not capable of rendering her incoherences intelligible by a plain, straitforward explanation of what she meant ; if she was, she desired her to do it directly.

" Tis clear, madam," said Betty, " that you do not suspect, that every thing that happened last night was discovered."

" No. I do not."

" Shall I tell you how it happened to be discovered, and all about it ?"

" Yes, that is exactly what I want."

She then related every thing that occurred from her *accidentally* dropping the things into the well, to the parties returning again into the kitchen. She was equally distinct in stating all the facts to which she and they were witnesses, as she was in relating all the impudent observations made upon them at the time they occurred, and the gross re-

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flexions they had produced since; carefully however avoiding to mention any names.

Of the girl's insanity she then had no doubt, and began to be a little afraid of her, but her apprehensions subsided on seeing her rise and walk towards the door. As she held the door in her hand, she turned round, and said, that her mistress thought Miss Markham had better consult the gentleman about getting away, and that as he had got a chaise and four horses ready to set off at any time, she thought the best way would be for them to go together. "So it would," said Miss Barbara, "much the best way. I should like of all things to see the gentleman and settle it so with him, for I am very impatient to go." "Shall I send him to you?" "By all means; now, directly." Betty withdrew.

As soon as the girl was out of the room, Miss Barbara sat down to recover herself a little from the fright, into which she was

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thrown during one part of the strange conversation, but of which she had been gradually getting the better ever since she was satisfied of her derangement.

She felt a little curious to know how the method of her madness would conduct her, in the whimsical task she had undertaken of going to send that curious creation of her disordered brain, the gentleman, to whom she had been so unknowingly courteous, and of whose gallant attentions to her, there were said to have been so many witnesses.

At that moment she heard a manly tread along the gallery, an abrupt stop at her threshold, and rather an impetuous kind of knock, followed, without any pause, by the sudden opening of the door, and the instant appearance of—Bearcroft. He presented himself with the air of a conqueror in the moment of victory. He stood erect, and, by a malicious smile, he audaciously manifested the gratification of his heart at the advantage

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he had so far gained over the innocence and the loveliness that sunk appalled before him.

The presence of a host of devils, surrounded by all the horrors of hell itself, could not have excited more terror in her soul than did the appearance of this arch fiend, after such an introduction.—She stood aghast! hoped she beheld a spectre, conjured up by her affrighted imagination.—He moved toward her.—She shrunk as from the arrow of death.—He spoke.—She uttered a scream so piercing, that hearts hard as adamant might have been penetrated by it; but he stood by unmoved.—She heaved a piteous groan, which sounded as if it came from the inmost recesses of her soul, and fell lifeless on the floor.

He rung up the chambermaid, ordered her to pursue the proper course for effecting a recovery, when he would be at hand to administer consolation, and convince the

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lady of the nonsense and the folly of such ridiculous behaviour, especially at such a time as that, and under such circumstances.

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CHAP. X.

FURTHER PROGRESS OF MR. BEARCROFT'S MACHINATIONS.—HE AIMS BY ARGUMENT TO OVERCOME THE VULGAR PREJUDICES OF BARBARA'S EDUCATION;—QUOTES SOME STRIKING INSTANCES IN SUPPORT OF HIS DOCTRINE;—POINTS OUT HOW VERY HAPPY SHE MAY BE IF SHE PLEASES, AND DECLARES HIS DETERMINATION TO MAKE HER SO, WHETHER SHE WILL OR NO.

HER recovery was not to be so soon effected as he imagined. The shock was so truly terrible to her, so greatly exceeding the effects of an ordinary fainting fit, that the girl began to be seriously alarmed for the consequences. She insisted on his not leaving the room, and the necessity of calling in professional assistance. He laughed at that; springled her himself with cold water, procured hartshorn and such other applications as are usually administered in similar cases,

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and perceiving at length that she was about to revive, he withdrew.

He had no great difficulty in settling the affair with the landlady, who was not very irreconcilable, lest the squire should withdraw his custom. She said she should not have minded it, if the rascals in the yard had not got hold of it; because Betty was a good girl as ever lived, and would sooner die than expose a lady, or a gentlemen either, that happened to go a little astray, as a body might say.

As to the ostlers, the stable-boys and postillions, the squire undertook to silence them. He had them all called in, and told them that it was for the credit of the house he warned them against ever talking about what they had seen. If they should ever be called upon to speak to it upon their oaths, which was not a very likely thing, he certainly would not insist upon their perjuring themselves; because what they had seen,

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they had seen, and no man should send his soul to hell for him; "but barring that, Dick ———." "Yes, your honor, I understand; barring the bible-oath you mean." "Aye, aye, all other oaths go for nothing. And I do say, that if under any other circumstances, except at my bidding, you ever make this affair the subject of conversation either among yourselves, or with any body else, you not only shall never see the colour of my money again, nor taste a drop of liquor at my expense; but what's more, I'll stick in your skirts as long as you live; and you pretty well know what that means, by what I've done for stammering Ned, that was waiter formerly at the Crown."

"Yes, yes, your honor, we know; you took away his character, poor lad, and he has never got a service since. He is dying by inches, poor fellow."—

"And so let him, and be d---d into the bargain; and mind that none of you ever

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get into the same scrape with me." So saying, he dismissed each with a little bit of gold, and ordered them for the credit of the house to deny the affair positively if they found it had got wind any where, and to swear that 'twas nothing more than a hum to quiz the fools that are so plaguy fond of a gossip.

Thus having so far satisfied the landlady's scruples about the credit of her house, he told her that he must leave the management of the chambermaid in this delicate business to her, for that somehow or other, he had no influence whatever with Betty; for whom he put money in the landlady's hand to buy a gown, and hoped that that, added to her power over her, would make her hold her tongue.

Before he left the bar, he did not omit to add, that his acknowledgements to Mrs. —— herself, should certainly not be wanting, but that they required to be of a description bet-

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ter worth a gentlewoman's acceptance than the paltry presents thrown to her domesticks.

Independent of the expected gift, the terms in which it was promised, made such an impression, that the squire might have written BEARCROFT'S BROTHEL in gold letters over the gateway, if he had chosen so to do, without offending the delicacy of the mistress of it, or alarming her squeamishness for the reputation of a house that in fact had no great character to lose.

By this time, he reckoned on the lady's being so far recovered, as to be able to comprehend what he had to say to her, and as to her being in a condition to go through such a trial without torture to herself, that he was perfectly indifferent about.

He dreaded nothing more than her regaining too much strength. Her strong animal spirits, unbroken by the shock she had sustained, would have been too powerful for

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him; he therefore felt it necessary to renew the attack without delay.

He well knew that he had not to deal with one of your over delicate, over susceptible, faint-away misses, whose weapons of defence consisted merely of sighs, tears, and swoonings. If she had not sunk as she did, under the tremendous effect of the discovery which developed itself with so alarming a burst of conviction the moment he entered her chamber, she must have been more than mortal woman; but, the violence of that shock being somewhat abated, he had no fears for a repetition of it. Barbara's high and proud spirit, under all the disadvantages of the blow by which he had so recently felled her, afforded him assurance of her not surrendering at discretion without a mighty struggle; and prepared for that conflict he repaired to her chamber, which he entered with as little ceremony as before. He dismissed the attendant by a nod and then began.

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"Perhaps, madam, I ought in the first place to apologize for the abruptness of my visit to you this morning, but the aggregate of the powerful, and no doubt painful effect produced then, and of the additional impression that may be the result of the conversation we are entering upon now, will still leave the account of severities between us in a very unbalanced state. Miss Barbara Markham will not so soon have forgotten the amiable tenderness with which *she* yesterday treated Mr. Bearcroft, nor can she be surprised if '*the incorrigible baseness*' which has been '*twenty years employed in the arts of seduction*,' and the '*vile trade of entrapping innocent hearts*,' should manifest as little consideration for *her* feelings now, as she did for his then."

"Monster!" she exclaimed.

"Not exactly so, either, madam. I have hitherto passed for a man, in the estimation of those, whom I have better qualified to

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decide the question, than I have you, *yet;* and I am full of hope that your opinion will alter with your competency to speak to that point."

To this detestable insinuation she replied only with a look of unutterable contempt and abhorrence, which the villain felt most sensibly.

"Very expressive indeed, madam; but very ill-timed. At so critical a moment as the present, you would do better to govern your deportment by a thorough consideration of the precise situation you are in. The immeasurable distance at which Mr. Bearcroft's *immoral habits* threw him yesterday from the virtuous purity of Miss Barbara Markham, is reduced; is annihilated; it exists not. In that respect, madam, we are now upon a perfect equality. You have now no more character to lose than myself. The breath of rumor, swift as the passing air, has given a currency to the tale e'er this,

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that is as incapable of repression as the forked lightning."

A gush of tears at this moment, somewhat relieved the agony of her distress, or she must again have sunk under the cruel pressure.

"That the lady under a pretence of going to London, followed Mr. Bearcroft to this house of assignation, where the superfluous guards to her chamber obliged her to get out of bed and undo locks, bolts, and bars, to give him admission; and that, from an awkward combination of circumstances, there unfortunately happened to be no less than half a dozen witnesses to the transaction, is as indelibly established in the world's opinion, as the plain fact of our joint existence."

She most piteously exclaimed, "Oh God! Oh God! has virtue *no* protector!" and hid her face.

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"Virtue!" he replied, "a word!" an ideal ingredient among the whimsical prejudices of education, that only torments its possessors, and is never discarded without being replaced by the enjoyment of all that positive happiness, which nature in the formation of the sexes, destined us to be the instruments of to each other.

"You yourself saw (continued he) on the race-course not a fortnight ago, how superior all the enjoyments, the pleasures, the gratifications, and the delights of those women were, who unrestrained by the abominable fetters that *virtue* imposes on her devotees, gave a loose to the unassumed gaiety of their souls, and partook freely of all the festivities of the day; whilst the demure daughters of *virtue* dared not even bedeck their countenances with a smile. Like the spell-bound lady in Comus, or rather so many automatons, they sat there the serious samples of a painful sobriety that was as foreign from

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the genuine impulses of their hearts, as from those of the more generous creatures I would have you imitate."

During this satanic harangue, her endeavour to stifle altogether her sense of hearing, was aided by the earnestness with which she devoted all her faculties to a contemplation of what was to be the end of his expostulations; what shocking catastrophe they were to lead to; and how, situated as she was, she might best hope to counteract or frustrate, or make him postpone, the accomplishment of his horrid and obvious design.

He went on—"Knowing as I do, but which you have not yet had opportunities of knowing, the superior enjoyments of life that belong to the votaries of pleasure, it is not possible for me, interested as I am, and ever must be, in your happiness."—(The struggle was a painful one here, by which she overcame an involuntary effort of her tongue to give utterance to her feelings). "I say, ma-

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dam, that devoted as I am to the promoting your felicity henceforth, I can see nothing in the revolution at hand, but what calls for congratulation; and will ultimately, I hope speedily, be productive of a cheerfulness that shall extinguish for ever the gloom that seems to oppress you at the present moment."

The unbroken silence and attention with which she allowed him to proceed so far, persuaded him that all the difficulties of the case were got over; but still, as the extreme delicacy of her mind could scarcely be thought as yet to have subsided, so far as to make personal freedoms of any kind acceptable, he most studiously avoided even to take her by the hand, and artfully shaped his discourse in a way best calculated to reconcile her forthwith to the surrender he reckoned upon.

"But, madam, whether the prospect is agreeable or not, the die is now cast, and

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there is no altering the already enforced decrees of fate. The happiness of your days *must* now be sought for in a different path from that in which you have been hitherto pursuing it, and my experience creates the confidence with which I take upon me to say, you will not eventually regret the change.

"Destitute as you are rendered by the ruin of your father's fortunes, an obstinate adherence to the rigid dictates of virtue might, if she smiled upon you *very* benignly, elevate you to a teacher's form at a country boarding-school; or, which is a far less desirable lot, attach you to the person of some antiquated dowager, in quality of a confidential companion, to witness the disgusting approach of decaying nature to its last stage of existence, and to bear with infirmities of temper that are ten thousand times worse.

"If you will but give to these considerations the cool and dispassionate reflexions of

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a sensible mind, you will see them precisely as I do, and welcome with smiles the change of destiny that awaits you. To shrink from, or to combat that destiny, with any effect, is now utterly impracticable. My power over you here is irresistible, but my aim and my hope is, to owe the consummation so inevitably at hand, not to the exercise of that power, but to the generous and frank surrender of your lovely person to my protection for the remainder of life.

"There is one question, madam, that is entitled to your *very* serious consideration, namely, *where*, if these doors were instantly thrown open to you, where *could* you go? Who *would* receive you? Ponder, I pray you, upon that.—It will shew to you the extreme probability of your becoming to me a suitor for that protection, which you are now so much more graciously solicited to accept, and you are not so destitute of foresight as to estimate that difference erroneously.

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"One word more, madam, and, for the present, I have done. If, on due reflexion, the influence of early prejudices, which are often difficult to overcome, should still induce you to prefer the dull and sober path of reputable life, that choice is still within your reach; but I alone can bestow it. I am ready to proclaim you my wife, and to make you such, and to persuade the people here that you were such before we came here; and if to the ardor with which I originally sought your hand, you will add a consideration of the eclat I should derive from making you such now you are destitute of dower, you will see too plainly the interest that I have in becoming your husband, to doubt for a moment that I will, if you desire it.

"But that, madam, is a result produceable by one means only, and I will leave you to reflect upon it;—persuaded that the more you do reflect, the more clearly you will be convinced, not only of the necessity

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of complying, but of its obvious expediency also.

"I retire with a fond and confident reliance on your exertions for the full recovery of those spirits and that cheerfulness which adds so indescribably to the charms of your beauty. I will not press you to that reply now, which I trust will cost you neither pain or effort at our next interview. It shall be here at the dinner hour. The servant shall come for your approbation of the best arrangement the larder will admit of, and I shall hope to experience that you will feel disposed to make me a welcome guest, and the succeeding hours happy ones."

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CHAP. XI.

MR. BEARCROFT RECKONS WITHOUT HIS HOST;—ANTICIPATES RATHER PREMATURELY AND CALCULATES RATHER INACCURATELY ON THE EFFECTS OF HIS ELOQUENCE; WHILST BARBARA, RENOUNCING HIS PROTECTION, PLACES HER RELIANCE ON THAT OF PROVIDENCE, UNDER WHOSE INFLUENCE SHE EFFECTS HER ESCAPE, AND FORMS SOME PLANS TO COUNTERACT MR. BEARCROFT.

WHEN he had withdrawn to his own room, where, after securing the laundry staircase, he sat to guard his prisoner, he felt as confident of the complete success of his enterprise, as he did of the light by which he saw his way.

This, he thought, was a case in which silence, though sometimes equivocal, *could* imply nothing but consent. Not a syllable, not a breath, not a motion of dissent, from the period of his so clearly convincing her of her mistaken notions of virtue, and all that stuff.

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But how could she; how could a sensible, shrewd, penetrating baggage like her, avoid seeing the very moment it was pointed out to her, how much it was the judgment of her game, especially as the cards were now dealt, to embrace, with as little delay as possible, the only means of exchanging her present deplorable and d---nable situation, for the only chance of happiness that lay before her.

Well! well! there was an end of it now. Now she would be satisfied. She had had her faintings and her squallings, and all the nonsensical pranks, without which they none of them have the courage to make that sacrifice on the altar of unrestrained love, which nature at the very moment of their births destined them for.

He gave himself no small credit for the forbearance with which he had abstained from following up the obvious success of his eloquence, by any of those nearer approaches

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which perhaps, convert as she certainly was, to the doctrines he had urged, she might not be so ripe for, as to encourage with that sort of reception which alone can make them the immediate prelude to more perfect enjoyments.

From a little shew of timidity on his entering the chamber at dinner, which he thought might indeed require some tender assiduities to overcome, and to get her fairly seated at table, he gradually traced the progress of all the succeeding ceremonies.

First of all, the gentle approach to reconciliation and familiarity which the presence of the servant would facilitate; before whom a distant behaviour would not only have an aukward appearance, but force recollection to a very unnecessary view of what was past, and could not be too soon forgotten; then the downcast look and scarlet blush with which she would seem relunctantly to yield to the

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implied token of love, which is conveyed by sanctioning with her hand, the amorous touch of the glass, and which gives so intoxicating a zest to the juice it contains.

When the cloth is removed, and the servant withdrawn, they, and they alone are left together, except indeed the little million of sportive cupids that float unseen about the room, to fan into a flame the fires of love, that now begin to kindle apace. To the tender pressure of the palm she possibly may scruple at first to make the merited return, but by degrees a generous sympathy prevails; her quickening pulse proclaims the growing ardour. The wanton god, proud of so rare a sacrifice, bedecks his altar with its gayest wreathes; and the flowing current of his high priests swelling veins, infuriate with desire, proclaim the maddening tumult of emotions that satiated love alone can calm.

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In such licentious strains did he anticipate his triumph; but if the amorous swain could have known how little the feelings of the fair one were in unison with his own, his confidence of the approaching bliss would not have been so strong.

As soon as she was alone, and so far recovered as to be capable of reflecting with a little composure on the horrors of the scene which she had no means of interrupting, and the still more alarming dangers of the scene to come, she devoted all the powers of her distracted mind to the task of devising by what miracle of Providence it might yet be possible to avoid the execution of the shocking sentence, already pronounced, and which the abhorrent executioner was obviously resolved on carrying into effect in the course of a very few hours.

It was now clear to her that the chambermaid was a confederated instrument, devoted to the will of the wretch who had her so

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completely in his power. To attempt the purchase of her assistance by a higher bribe than she might expect from Bearcroft, was too great a risk to be encountered; for independant of the fear that the wench might have for the consequences of his rage, so venal a creature would not be unlikely to accept her bribe, and betray her after. She was obliged therefore to abandon all hopes of aid from that quarter; and as the likeliest way to avoid suspicion of her real intentions, she resolved on such a mode of behaviour to Betty, as might best induce her to believe that she meditated no further resistance.

The first thing that occurred to her was, to see if an escape was practicable through the sash window, which opened to the garden; for as to the door, she had no doubt about its being well watched. On reconnoitering the premises, she perceived hat the descent would be facilitated by the hed of a bee-hive stand and a pump, which

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were most conveniently situated beneath the window. At the sound of Betty's footsteps along the gallery, she resumed her seat in the easy chair, when the girl entered with a bill of fare, and a kind message from Bearcroft, requesting her to say if it contained any thing she approved; or, if she would have the goodness to mention any thing else that she might like better, no pains should be spared to get it.

She replied, that her spirits had been exceedingly agitated; too much so indeed, to admit of her making any choice; that her being able to meet Mr. Bearcroft at all at dinner-time, would necessarily depend on the success of her endeavours to overcome in some degree the effects of the alarm she had sustained; that she was the more affected by it, as she had passed an almost sleepless night, and could derive relief from nothing so much as from the uninterrupted repose of a few hours, which however, the

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noise of the inn-yard scarcely allowed her to reckon upon.

Betty assured her that every precaution should be taken to prevent her being disturbed, and retired quite overjoyed with the apparent change.

On Bearcroft's being acquainted with this, he affected to feel no surprize; he gave Betty to understand that he was only astonished at the lady's making so much resistance as she had done; sent her back to say, that the yard should be covered so completely with straw as to prevent any noise from the carriages, and that the servants should be forbid to converse, except in signs and whispers, till she rung the bell for the cloth to be laid.

The better to prevent suspicion, and to keep more effectually alive the vain expectations on which she built all her hopes, she told Betty, that in case she did not ring

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before the approach of the dinner-hour, it was her wish to be called. When the girl was gone, and the door fastened, Barbara began to consider the practicability and the promise of the escape which appeared to her to be the only way of averting the dreadful fate that threatened her.

She had no fears about getting safely down to the garden, but how to dispose of herself after, was a much more perplexing consideration. The fence that surrounded the garden seemed to be insurmountable, and there was no getting away from the place of descent without passing by windows on the ground floor that possibly might expose her to a fatal interruption.

Besides, there was something extremely questionable as to the success of an enterprize which subjected her so much to the hazard of being observed by some one or other of the people about the house, to whom her person was familiar, and who

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considered her in the light of a property belonging to their liberal benefactor, Mr. Bearcroft.

The most she could reckon upon was the possibility of so active an exertion as might admit of her reaching some house in the neighbourhood, where her story would interest the hearers of it in her behalf.

She foresaw the effrontery with which Bearcroft would bring forward his numerous witnesses to assert the shocking falsehood of her having admitted him to pass the night in her chamber, and the great difficulty after that of keeping alive in any one, the least disposition to protect her against the authority over her which he would assume on that ground.

To meet this danger in the best possible way, she sat down, and with all the composure she was mistress of, she drew up in form of an affidavit a written statement of

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all the circumstances of the adventure, and having done that, her final resolution was to force her way through any impediments that might offer, till she reached the parsonage-house, which was at no great distance, and as the rector was a justice of the peace, to insist on swearing to the truth of it in the first instance.

If such a force interfered as she might be incapable of overpowering, she determined to try the effect of her voice, by cries of murder, and in every way likely to interest strangers within hearing, and if that failed, she was prepared to sacrifice life itself rather than become the victim of so atrocious a villain.

She felt too, that being now completely free from the effects of that surprize which enfeebled and overcame her before, she should be less liable to sink under the pressure of any attack that might be made upon her. Her confidence and her courage

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encreased every moment, and her hopes of success were greatly strengthened by her reflecting on her fair claims to the protection of every one beyond the pale of the spell-bound premises which confined her.

Having thus overcome all her fears, she opened the window, which she did very deliberately, from a dread of being heard by Bearcroft, her vigilant centinel on duty in the adjoining chamber. The first thing that struck her, after she had got up the sash, was, that the window of Bearcroft's room was open also. This intimidated her not a little, but after some pause, and a little reflection, she became convinced that no danger was equal to that of staying where she was, and forthwith proceeded.

She had got completely out of the window; one foot was resting on a projecting range of brickwork which went all along the building, and she was feeling out with the other foot for the top of the pump, which

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was to be the next step in the descent. At this moment her eye, then nearly level with the window cill, glanced on the cloak-bag belonging to Charles Fortescue.——It instantly kindled in her mind a thousand new ideas, and a thousand fresh hopes, and she became intuitively possessed of a plan, in a moment, that determined her, in case her expectations were not disappointed, to renounce altogether that which she had before adopted.

She climbed up the window and entered the room as expeditiously as her endeavours to be silent would admit of.—The fastening of the cloak-bag was a chain and padlock, over which, a leather flap was buckled. Foreseeing a convenience in being able to leave it behind her to all outward appearance as if unopened, she cut away a strip of leather the whole length of the cloak-bag, which admitted of her taking off with the chain and padlock, the parts they were immediately attached to.

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by a very slow pace to the other inn, which stood but a little way on the other side of the brook. She there called the waiter, told him her hat had blown off into the river as she came over the bridge, and asked if he could not accommodate her with one. He produced his best, for which she put a guinea into his hand, and he was abundantly satisfied.

She had formed a scheme in her mind, for two purposes. One was, to divert Bearcroft from pursuing her on the way to London, which would have been his certain course the moment he discovered that she had made her escape; and the other was, if possible, to get him out of the way, that she might question the people of the house, in his absence, on various particulars which she deemed it highly important to ascertain.

She then ordered a chaise, which was soon ready, and gave a note to the driver, telling him that he must go with it to

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doctor ———, a physician, who she informed him (which was not true), lived fourteen miles from thence across the country. She added, that the doctor would see by that note that he was wanted to attend a sick gentleman at the squire's house, at the Grange. She paid the hire of the chaise, and the boy also, and told him that he need not hurry so as to distress his horses, for if he returned with the doctor any time before it was dark, it would do very well.

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CHAP. XII.

SUCCESS OF BARBARA'S PLANS.—HER NEW PROTECTOR PROVES TOO MANY FOR MR. BEARCROFT. IN A VIOLENT CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM, MR. BEARCTOFT RECEIVES A DESPERATE WOUND, WHICH HIS ANTAGONIST SCARCELY ALLOWS THE SURGEON TIME TO DRESS, BEFORE HE SENDS THE SMARTING PATIENT ON A FOOL'S ERRAND ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

HAVING calculated the time that had elapsed since the chambermaid left her to herself, and the approach of the period when she had desired to be called; having also allowed so much time for the empty chaise to get on, as would prevent its being overtaken before it reached the end of the stage, she ordered another chaise, with four horses, to convey her on her way towards London.

Whilst it was preparing, she penned a

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note and letter, which she resolved on delivering with her own hand as she passed the inn, where those to whom she addressed them still imagined her to be safely secured.

Her extraordinary powers of varying the expression of her countenance and the tone of her voice (as already described), added to the perfect disguise she had given to her person by the change of her dress, left her no fears for the possibility of being discovered.

To guard however against the worst, she had the precaution to tell the drivers, that if when she stopped at the door of the other inn to deliver a couple of letters and a message, she should see occasion to drive away from thence in haste, she should call out, "*Boys do your best*," and on that signal, they were to set off at full speed, and get to the end of the stage so quick as to make it impossible for pursuers to overtake them. If no such occasion oc-

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curred, they were to move off at a moderate pace only, till they reached the turnpike, and then to put on at a smart rate and make the best of their way.

Her note to the landlady was as follows :

" Mrs. ———,

" When this is delivered to you, I shall be at some miles distance from your house.

" I enclose more than a sufficiency to pay for the entertainment I had during my stay with you, and the gentleman who bears this, will produce to you a written order for my trunk and cloak-bag.

" Whether you are or are not an accessary in the wicked plot that seems to have succeeded so far as to have impressed some of your people with a most erroneous opinion to my disadvantage, and with an obvious inten-

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tion of leading to consequences infinitely more fatal to me, I know not; but be that as it may, I consider it as due to myself to apprise you of the possible consequences that you may draw down upon yourself, if you give the sanction of your opinion to the false, slanderous, and wicked reports which your chambermaid made me believe to be current throughout your family.

"Whatever opinions may have been entertained through the subtle and consummate arts which were levelled at my reputation in the first instance, as a preliminary step to my more effectual ruin, I warn you most seriously against countenancing any reports that tend to contradict the following fact, namely, that *no living creature, except myself, had access to the chamber I slept in, from the moment your servant left me last night, till she came to attend me in the morning.*

"This is all I chuse to say at present on

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the subject of the villanous attempt meditated in your house, and with the assistance and co-operation of one of your servants, at least.

"You are already so far implicated in the consequences as to make it of no small import to you, to be extremely guarded in your future conduct respecting it, after this solemn intimation from

BARBARA MARKHAM."

To Mr. Bearcroft she wrote as follows:

"The providence which has enabled me to fly from a monster, whose existence is a disgrace to his species, will assuredly, sooner or later, subject him to the remorse of conscience which guilt, and villany so consummate, is seldom known wholly to avoid.

"Defeated as you are in the accomplishment of your wicked purpose, let the dread of that justice with which the Almighty

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avenger of crimes expiates atrocities like yours, impel you to deserve his mercy by doing all you can now, to right her whom you have recently done so much to injure.

"As you value your soul's peace hereafter, quit not, I charge you, the scene of your base designs till you have done all that it is possible to do, to counteract the foul calumnies you have caused, with so much refined art, to be spread at the expense of my good name.

"Comply with this injunction, as you dread the envenomed stings of your own conscience, and the maledictions of

"BARBARA MARKHAM."

On driving up to the gate of the inn, she boldly asked if there was a gentleman there of the name of Bearcroft, and desired to speak with him.

He soon made his appearance, and on his

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approaching the door of the carriage, she addressed him thus:

"I am requested, sir, by a lady whom I met in a chaise and pair a few miles distant, on the road to ———, to deliver this letter into your hands as I passed by;" and "here," said she, beckoning to the landlady, "here is a letter for you too." His astonishment on looking at the signature, deprived him, for a few seconds, of all power of speech or action. Incapable of reading the contents deliberately, he rapidly glanced his eye over the lines so as just to catch a taste of its tenor, and then, with the violence of a maniac, he flew across the yard, calling for the chambermaid, and exclaiming, "d—nation!" with a voice like thunder.

No language can describe the delight with which Barbara (who could see across the yard and to the gallery), beheld the mad-like rage with which he tore along.

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Disregarding the wench who followed him running with the key of the door, he pushed forward; his feet became entangled in the straw which he had caused to be strewn to a considerable depth all over the yard, and he fell with the accelerated motion and encrease of weight derived from the impetus of his hasty progress. His head struck against the sharp edge of an iron wheel hoop, and the blood gushed out instantly in a stream.

Scarcely allowing himself time to overcome the dizziness occasioned by the fall, he resumed his imprecations, and shuffled along as well as he could to the gallery stairs.

He first burst open the partition door, shattering it all to pieces by the unnecessary violence of his pressure against it. The door of the chamber was then heard to crack and fly open with equal violence, when he of course became convinced that the bird was indeed flown, and to all appearance, in the precise dress he had beheld her in a

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few hours before; for her trunk and cloak-bag remained just as before, except the addition of the direction affixed to each.

On the waiter's running up at Barbara's request, to ask if he had any commands for the gentleman in the chaise, who was rather in a hurry to get on, he ran down again like a fury, crying out, "Stop, for God's sake stop a moment! I'll be with you this instant! I'll not detain you a minute!"

Nothing could equal the disgusting, the truly shocking spectacle he exhibited on his return to the chaise door. The blood which had run over his whole face, and begrimed his linen, his hands, and every part of his dress, still flowed most copiously, though the handkerchief which he had applied to stop it was completely saturated.

Out of breath, and unable to speak, he grasped the door-handle, as if to prevent her driving off. She expressed her opinion,

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that immediate attention to his accident was surely of more importance than any thing he could have to say to her, and urged the sending for a surgeon. He signified by a motion of his hand, his desire that the waiter should run for one directly, and then, scarcely able to speak distinctly, he prayed her to alight.

She said, she could not possibly do that, as her business required her to make all possible haste.—" I conjure you, sir,—do; —pray do;—if but for a moment. I have but few questions to ask, but my strength and my spirits are exhausted. I cannot stand. Pray, sir——"

Convinced, that exclusive of the impaired condition of his faculties, there was no danger of her being discovered, and that even if she was, his enfeebled state left her no power to combat that she could not easily overcome and get away from, she bid them take him in, ordered the door to

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be opened, and with her *couteau de chasse* in her hand was about to alight, when she was prevented by the hasty arrival of a light cart, which the driver, without any ceremony, placed between the post-chaise and the inn-door.

The space was scarcely sufficient to admit of the cart's driving up, and when there, it completely blocked the passage, and beside interrupting Bearcroft's return into the house, it obliged Barbara to descend from the opposite side of the chaise.

The agitation of his spirits, and the exhausted condition to which he was reduced by his recent exertions under such distracting circumstances, disabled him from speaking. He threw himself down upon a seat which was placed by the side of the doorway, and waved his hand in token of apology, and to bespeak a little indulgence. They sat at least ten minutes before he

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could sufficiently recover himself to open his lips.

During this time the driver of the cart, who had put them to considerable inconvenience by stopping up the entrance to the house, was busied in preparing to alight with a poor girl and a child, whom he was officially attending with a pass to forward to the parish of the former, explained that the abruptness of his behaviour had been occasioned by his fear that the girl, who appeared to be in a dying condition, would expire before he could reach the inn and have her lifted out.

As they were carrying her along, they necessarily passed close by the place where Bearcroft was seated. Her more than half-closed eyes having caught a glimpse of him, she uttered a shriek which pierced his very heart, and produced a momentary delirium of so violent a nature as to render the

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strength of all the people near him unequal to the task of holding him.

The violent utterance of her anguish seemed to have exhausted all that remained of life in the frame of the poor emaciated female, but the effect it had produced on Bearcroft made it very much an object with Barbara to recover her if possible so far at least from the swoon into which she had fallen, as to admit of her accounting for the excess of horror she obviously felt on seeing him; not that Barbara had any doubts on the subject.

The remaining traces of loveliness which were still discernible on her palid countenance, the sweet symmetry of her form, which manifested itself in spite of the woe-worn state to which it was reduced; and, above all, the little cherub which she had not strength enough to hug to her bosom, formed altogether such a combination of evidence to the fact which Barbara suspect-

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ed, that further corroboration was scarcely necessary.

As soon, however, as the poor girl was a little recovered, and had with great reluctance consented to moisten her lips with a cordial, which no entreaty could prevail on her to drink, she made, as it were, the last effort of expiring nature, and, with frequent interruptions from the failure of her breath, expressed herself as follows:

" The hand of death is already on me, and in a few short moments will finally terminate the existence of the veriest wretch that ever sunk under the joint pressure of poverty and guilt.

" My seducer was the man at whose appearance I was so appalled just now. The meeting with him under any circumstances, at the awful moment of my soul's winging its flight from this earthly abode of clay, this corruptible, this loathsome mortality, could

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not fail to agonize my departing spirit, and to bring back to my disgusted lip the bitter cup which the fruits of a sincere repentance had enabled me to cast from me, I had hoped, for ever; but the ghastliness of his appearance, glutted and begrimed with blood, struck me, not so much as the real living individual who had been the author of all my sorrows, as that of a horrid spectre, placed there by a supernatural power to indicate to me in my last moments that the profligate betrayer of my innocence, who, though rolling in wealth, had abandoned me and the sweet babe, of whose existence he was himself the author, to misery and want, without provocation or pretence of any kind, was about to suffer the vengeance due to unrepented crimes which a just Providence will never let go unpunished."

Life was ebbing apace. Every word fell from her as if it would be the last. She seemed to have no longer any thought concerning herself, and appeared to repose on

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the effects of a fruitful repentance with a degree of confidence and composure that manifested the most perfect resignation.

There still, however, remained one link of the terrestial chain from which she could not disengage herself. It seemed to cling around her heart, and to render inefficacious the fatal sisters' endeavours to cut the final thread. Though she no longer retained sufficient strength to hold the babe to her bosom, which kindly office was performed by Barbara, she manifested the deepest anguish and distress if it removed from her but for a moment. A look of appeal to Barbara's humanity, accompanied by a flood of tears, which fell as if they were the last the fair fountain would ever produce, acted so powerfully upon Barbara's sensibility, that she could not refrain from lifting the little creature to her lips, and exclaiming—" No, sweet cherub! thou shalt not be an outcast. So long as I possess the means to do a parent's duty by thee, thou shalt not want a

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parent." Then turning to the dying penitent, she said, " Let that assurance, ill-fated fugitive, dissipate the anxiety which so embitters the moments of your soul's departure. Henceforth your child is mine, and shall not want protection or a friend."

The dying mother was now past the power of utterance, but her countenance, as if lighted up by a forced ebullition of all that remained of life within her, assumed an expression of heartfelt gladness, gratitude, and joy, which settled into a smile of sweet complacency as the vital spark expired, and remained on her clay-cold visage unchanged even after the informing spirit was fled.

As soon as Barbara could dispose of the infant to her satisfaction for a little while, she hastened back to Bearcroft, whom she found a prey to compunctions the most tormenting that humanity could endure.

The appearance of the just departed vic-

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tim, at a moment so extremely critical, had levelled at him a blow against which he could not make a stand. His fortitude forsook him altogether. The feelings of a rancourous remorse seemed to be fast consuming him, and the absence of the surgeon from home, left him without any means of relief from the serious apprehensions he entertained of having received a fracture in his fall, which might be speedily productive of fatal consequences.

Under these impressions he expressed a wish to make his will, and a neighbouring attorney was accordingly sent for, whom Barbara contrived to keep aloof till she had made her essay in favour of the infant orphan whom she had just taken under her protection.

She considered the alarm under which he then acted to be more the effect of the stings of conscience under which he was writhing, than any well founded fears respecting the

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fracture, and foresaw that if he recovered from the effects of the accident, his diabolical spirit might again resume its empire, and dictate to his furious passions a renewal of all his past habits, pleasures and propensities.

In that case, any clause in favour of the child that might form part of a will, might be rendered utterly unproductive of good to the orphan by the destruction or cancelling of the will itself, which would be one very probable consequence of his recovery, and to guard against this, her plan was to persuade him, if possible, to execute a deed of gift in the infant's favour, which could not be rescinded.

The abject state to which he was reduced by the severity of the various conflicts he had recently sustained had well prepared him for the reception of impressions that were essential to her success.

She first of all intimated to him, that

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having been originally intended for a surgeon she had for some time studied under an able practioner, and attended lectures; but quitting the profession at an early period, when she had acquired no more than a very superficial degree of knowledge, she felt considerable hesitation in venturing an opinion on a case of so delicate, so difficult, and so dangerous a nature as the fracture he smarted under might prove to be; as, however, there might be found on inspection some unequivocal and certain indications on which the slenderest experience might pronounce either one way or the other, she had no objection to examine it if he was desirous she should do so.

He expressed the eagerest impatience for her removing the bandages directly and proceeding to the investigation, and she scrupled not, after a critical attention, to assure him that, as far as her immatured judgment enabled her to form an opinion, she thought it adviseable to lose no time in procuring the

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best assistance, and recommended the sending expresses for professional aid in every direction.

This being ordered, she gravely suggested to him the propriety of losing no time in the arrangement of his worldly concerns, on which subject, she said, she had a duty to discharge in behalf of his infant offspring by the unhappy young woman, of whom and of whose last words she professed to be at a loss how to express herself.

"Then (he exclaimed) I will assist you. She no doubt told you, and if she did she told you truly, I was her seducer. Perhaps to that she added, and if not, I will add it myself, I am her murderer too! I feel it, and the remorse it fastens upon me at this instant subjects me to torments that are not to be surpassed by those of the damned!"

"Then, sir, if such are your feelings, resort to the most likely means of alleviating

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them. Avoid to aggravate the evils of which you are the author; and seek to diminish their direful effects by making such timely provision for the fruit of your libidinous practices, as may rescue from want in this world the innocent offspring of the injured parent you have so prematurely hastened to another."

"'Tis my intention so to do when the attorney whom I have sent for arrives."

"In what manner do you propose to do it?"

"By a clause in my will."

"Oh no! by no means blend in an instrument which must necessarily refer to numerous ordinary concerns, an act of duty so paramount to every thing else; by no means put off to the day of your death, which may be a very distant one, the operation of an arrangement so proper. Besides,

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why trust to any chance that can be avoided, the possible evil of your not being so capable of discharging so well at a distant period, the duty you so properly feel disposed to do now? Consider, sir, it is your own child that we are speaking of, and if it should so happen that the vicissitudes of life, which often reduce men of affluence even to indigence, should narrow your means and disable you from doing as you might wish in this respect, how poignant would be your regret that you neglected now to do the good in question, whilst your power to do it is so ample."

"What should I do?"

"Call to your recollection some man of integrity in whom you can confide; execute to him a deed of gift to be held in trust for this child, entitling him forthwith to what you may deem proper for his maintenance and bringing up; a suitable provision for his education, and such a sum when of age as

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you may judge right to launch him into life with; and a reference to your will may direct its application in the event of the child not living to be of age. I have solemnly pledged my honor to its dying mother to watch over its welfare, and by such an arrangement as I now recommend, my interference in the discharge of that sacred duty will be freed from perplexities that otherwise might be the result of its being mixed with other concerns in the general bequest of your property, with which I can have nothing at all to do."

He grasped her hand, and vehemently exclaimed "Generous hearted youth! discharge as becomes your character the trust you have undertaken, and let not a recollection of the worthlessness of the father act as a drawback on the amiable attentions you bind yourself to bestow on the unhallowed offspring of his sensuality."

The bell was rung to enquire if the at-

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torney was not arrived. On his being announced, Barbara repeated the manner in which it was agreed that the child was to be provided for, requested that when that instrument was completed it might be committed to her care, and withdrew.

In the midst of the various attentions she had been obliged to bestow on objects foreign to her own immediate and most interesting concern, she was constantly on the rack to discover if the occurrences that were multiplying every moment, afforded any means of working out her justification against the result of Bearcroft's behaviour respecting her.

In the event of his accident being pronounced of fatal tendency by the surgeon, who was every moment expected, she had no fear but that the terrors of conscience which assailed him would operate most effectually in her favor, and induce him to do her right by a frank confession of his

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villany, and a complete vindication of her honor; but of that chance she had considerable doubts, and relied on his resuming all his former dispositions if ever he should be in a condition to shake off the apprehensions of approaching death.

The attorney having finished taking his instructions, was obliged to go home to prepare the instruments; for though the will might have been executed on common paper, the proposed deed of gift in favour of the child required a particular stamp, and the state of the devisor not appearing to be so critically dangerous as to make a little delay of any consequence, the lawyer proposed doing the whole at his own desk, and promised to return as speedily as possible.

As soon as he retired, Barbara was summoned up again to Bearcroft, whose agitation of mind was arisen to a degree of horror in the extreme.

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She tried various ways to pacify him; in the performance of which task she experienced that nothing acted so powerfully towards restraining the frequent, violent, and horrifick bursts of passion which proceeded from the remorse and despair by which he was oppressed, as the warning him that whether his accident might or might not be of so fatal a tendency as they apprehended, nothing could so greatly aggravate his danger as his giving way to so much fury; but during a temporary respite of his rage, which her arguments had procured, a new cause of distress broke in upon him.

He had been a good deal disconcerted on account of his valet and groom's not having arrived some hours before, according to orders he had given them the day before. On their being announced, he desired the valet might be sent up,

The moment he entered the room it was obvious from his looks that something more

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than ordinary had occurred, and Barbara proposed to retire. Bearcroft, however, requested her to stay, and bid the fellow speak out what he had to say without any ceremony.

The tale he had to tell was indeed a shocking one, and accounted for their being so many hours after their time, by stating that just as they were coming away, a young lady, then residing at Mr. Bearcroft's house, had made an attempt on her own life, and their stay had been occasioned by their going in different directions for medical assistance, which, however, proved useless, as she expired before they came away.

At the close of the recital the valet laid a letter on the table, which, he said, the lady had previously written and directed for Mr. Bearcroft, and then he withdrew.

Bearcroft continued some time in a state of perfect stupor. His eyes then rolled

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about, and his whole frame was convulsed, as if his brain was approaching to the verge of madness.

She reminded him how much his life at that moment depended on his being composed.

He made an effort to master the mixture of anguish and passion with which he was swoln; he hid his face in one corner of the easy-chair in which he was seated, and seemed as if endeavouring to shrink as it were from himself. At length he resumed his former attitude, and addressed Barbara as follows:

"The lady, sir, whose premature death you have just now heard announced, is another victim to the lascivious passion by which I have been influenced all my life long. Had my pursuit of unlawful pleasures been less profligate, or if the consequences of them, which now seem to be pressing

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upon me in all directions for my instant destruction, had not been so utterly insupportable, I might feel something like an inclination to seek in a thorough repentance for that consolation, which I fear the systematic course of my abandoned life and the incredible success of my pursuits have placed me beyond the possibility of ever tasting. So strong is this impression on my mind, and so unavailing seem to me all attempts to derive the least repose from experiments of that kind, that with the impious hope (as you will term it) of our religious persuasions being founded in error, I must relinquish all claim to, and decline all search after the forgiveness they hold out to such offenders as I am against its holy precepts, and adopting the principles of the athiest, consistently continue the course, I have chosen as long as my natural powers will enable me, and overcome as I can, the dreads which revelationists inspire in regard to a future state."

To what a pitch of depravity must the

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mind of that miserable being have arrived, who shrinks from the supplication of forgiveness because he considers the enormity of his sins to be beyond the power of the All-merciful to pardon! What an inducement is this to those who are the slaves of vice, not to continue in their mad career so long as at length to deem the excess of their misdoings capable of no other relief than is the result of an impious despair!

His train of reasoning was very unfavorable to Barbara's hopes of deriving the vindication of her own fair fame from his repentance, and she was preparing to combat his arguments, but he interrupted her by putting into her hand the letter which the valet had brought, with a request that she would open and read it. "I anticipate its contents (said he), and hope I am steeled against its tendency.

THE LETTER.

"A man capable of acting as you have

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done by me, is most probably incapable of feeling any remorse for the consequences of his atrocious behaviour. Nevertheless, as I have made my mind up to the withdrawing myself altogether from an existence which your desertion has rendered insupportable, I deem it right before I retire to remind you of the condition to which you have reduced me.

"Your bringing me down to this solitary mansion was obviously (as it has since turned out) necessary to give a stronger colour of probability to the fraud which was effected by your unprincipled associates assuming the holy character and office, in order to beguile into a mock-marriage a woman whose virtue you despaired of triumphing over by any other means. But why, after the accomplishment of your nefarious purpose, did you deem it necessary to become my jailor, and to lock me up with a privation of every comfort, every solace, and every necessary, except the ordinary supply of food? Was you afraid of

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my flying for refuge to my friends? that was not likely, as my conduct in their eyes could admit only of such a construction as deprived me of all claim to their attention. Did you apprehend that my becoming a fugitive might have proclaimed to the world how basely you had betrayed me? If that was your dread, 'twere to be lamented that the consequence had not struck you timely enough to have prevented the accomplishment of a crime that has subjected you to such an alternative. But be all that as it may, your abandoning me so immediately after possession, added to your inhuman treatment of me, so plainly prove that you entertain for me none of that affection which alone could make life desirable, that instead of becoming the pining and the lingering victim you evidently intend to make me, I have resolved on appealing forwith to the God of all justice against the cruelty of your behaviour, with a hope that I shall find in his presence a pardon for the sin I am about to commit, and that you will be able to plead at hi awful

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tribunal, in extenuation of your conduct, some better claim to his favor than can be founded on any part of your behaviour to the basely betrayed and deserted.

" E. T."

The arrival of the attorney at this moment prevented all animadversion on the contents of the letter. The deed of gift in favour of the child was executed, and committed to Barbara's keeping; the will also was executed, and a few seconds after the surgeon arrived.

It was fortunate for Barbara's *petit protogé* that he did not arrive a few minutes sooner, for the confidence with which he declared that there was no fracture of the skull, and the light manner in which he treated the affair altogether, would assuredly have induced Bearcroft to decline, or, at any rate, to defer signing the papers.

Completely reassured by the surgeons opi-

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nion, his wound was no sooner dressed and his linen changed than his compunctions subsided, and he proceeded instantly to concert measures for renewing the amorous chace.

"Pray, sir, (said he to Barbara) how far off did you meet the lady from whom you brought the letter?"

"About four miles."

"Which road?"

"The road to ——————."

"At what pace was she moving?"

"Very slowly, and her progress seemed likely to be interrupted rather awkwardly, by one of the horses which drew her, having cast a shoe, in consequence of which the poor beast could scarcely crawl along."

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"Sir, I thank you."——"Rascals! get me a chaise and four to the door this instant. Fly as you value life."

On the surgeon's advising him against the journey on account of the roughness of the road and the certain benefit he would derive from repose, he impiously exclaimed that if at the end of the stage hell's mouth gaped wide to receive him, the fear of entering it should not deter him from the pursuit.

He took a respectful leave of Barbara, and then commenced his fool's errand across the country in a wild-goose chase after the identical person from whom he that very moment had received his directions how to proceed.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Printed by the Philanthropic Society,
St. George's-Fields.

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Barbara Markham.

A NOVEL

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Barbara Markham;

OR,

THE PROFLIGATE REQUITED.

A NOVEL.

" —— Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree,
" Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
" Of dragon-watch with uninchanted eye,
" To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
" From the rash hand of bold incontinence."

MILTON.

VOLUME II.

London:

Printed by the PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY, St. George's-Fields,
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1803.

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BARBARA MARKHAM.

CHAP. XIII.

BARBARA LEARNS FROM THE SURGEON THE CURRENT TALE OF HER OWN INCONTINENCE.—EXAMINATION OF THE PEOPLE AT THE INN.—BETTY CHAMBERMAID'S DETECTION, DISGRACE, AND DISMISSAL.

ANXIOUS as she was to make the best of her way to London, she could not resist so favorable an opportunity of ascertaining (at the expense of a few minutes) what was the precise opinion entertained of her, and what the effect of her letter to the landlady.

She began this enquiry by expressing to the surgeon the astonishment naturally excited by events that could not but appear very extraordinary in the eyes of a stranger.

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He met her desire to be informed, with a readiness that soon satisfied her of the currency her tale had obtained; and with a view of establishing a claim in his turn to some account of the apparent, but mysterious understanding that he had noticed between her and Bearcroft, he in few words told her that the gossipping propensities which characterize country places, had been unusually gratified there that morning by a discovery that had by that time spread itself over half the county; that the youngest daughter of a Mr. Markham who had not long resided about fifty miles further down that road, had made an assignation there with the gentleman whose wound he had just dressed, and either from some mismanagement on their own parts, or some unforeseen accident, the fact of her silently admitting him to her bedchamber, and of their having passed the night together, had been confirmed in a way that made it impossible even for the chambermaid to conceal or render doubtful, though she was a devilish clever girl, and

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had manifested great anxiety to do it for the credit of the house.

He explained all the particulars, and appealed to Barbara if there could be any question as to the certainty of a fact, that was so completely proved by the testimony of so many witnesses.

"Whether (continued he) it arose from her very natural displeasure at such an exposure, or whether she had any reason to suppose it was owing to his want of caution, or whatever the cause might be, the discovery had occasioned such a misunderstanding between her and her gallant as to throw the whole house into confusion.

"They however became pretty well reconciled afterwards, and were to have dined together; but as I learn from the person who called me to Mr. Bearcroft's assistance, the lady has contrived to effect her escape from

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him, and I conclude that he is now gone in pursuit of her, but so much more information is necessary for a perfect comprehension of their latter movements, than I am master of, that if you please we will send for the landlady, who will be to the full as willing to relate as we to hear, what further remains to be known of the affair."

"By all means (said Barbara), but let me first state to you that I am the cause of all the recent bustle you have witnessed, including the shocking accident that has befallen the gentleman. In obedience to the will of the lady, whom I met on the road, I was the bearer of a letter to him, and another to the landlady. It seems that her elopement was not suspected till then, and I must very frankly tell you, that with every allowance for the ease with which an entire stranger may be deceived by the representations of a person so deeply interested as she is in giving a favorable account of her own

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conduct, I cannot, without very convincing proof indeed, yield to the persuasion of her guilt."

"Oh! my dear sir (said the surgeon), if very convincing proof is all you want to satisfy you on that head, it is at hand, and in such abundance as to do away all your doubts."

He rang the bell, and desired that the landlady and all the witnesses might be called in.

There was a degree of intelligence as well as honesty in the countenance of the ostler, that determined Barbara to select him for the spokesman. She desired that the landlady would take a chair, and that all the rest might withdraw.

Nothing could exceed the clearness with which the fellow told his story. When he had finished, Barbara complimented him on

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the obvious integrity of his character, which she told him gave no small weight to his evidence; adding, that there were two or three questions which she was desirous of putting to him for the more perfect comprehension of the affair, and they were such as naturally arose from the clear and intelligible account he had given.

"Which of the several persons at the well, first called the attention of the rest to the noise on the gallery?" "Why I said before that 'twas Betty the chambermaid." "Aye, so I understood; but I wish you would repeat that part of your relation again."

He did so, describing as before, the difficulty with which Betty's mysterious exclamations of "hush!" and "what's that," was made to have any effect upon them.

"Nothing" (said Barbara) "can be more exact than the correspondence of your second

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account with your first, by both of which it appears, that before Betty could make any of you understand that there was something moving above stairs, she was obliged to make three or four different efforts to draw your attention that way."

"Yes, 'tis very true indeed; 'tis cartain that nobody but she heard it for a good bit."

"But do you suppose that if there really had been any such noise as she pretended to hear, that some of you would not have heard it as plain as she did? Is she so much quicker of hearing than you are?"

"Why, no; but what argufies that? Did not we directly after see the squire, with our own eyes, go out of his room and pass the *petition*-door to go to the lady's room?"

"Yes, my friend, I know you did, and if

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you had concealed yourself in a convenient place for watching his movements a little longer than you did, you would have seen him go back again."

"Should I ?"

"Which of ye was it said that he heard the inside bolt of the lady's chamber go !"

"Oh ! that was Dick."

"But I think you told us, that before Dick said any thing about that, Betty pretended to hear it ?" "Yes, yes, so she did."

"And do you think if Betty had not pretended to hear it, that Dick would have taken it into his head that he heard it himself ?"

"I can't say !"

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"Did you hear it yourself?" said the surgeon.

"Why no, that I cartainly did not."

"Was there any other of ye that did not hear it?"

"Yes, for when Dick said to Betty, 'Yes, I do hear it,' Sam said *he* didn't, if *Dick* did; and then Dick was so angry at Sam for giving him the lie as 'twere, that he rapt out an oath and *swore* he did."

"Well, my good fellow, (said Barbara), we will not trouble you any further at present, only be so good for a few moments to step into that inner room, as we may want you again presently."

This precaution was to prevent any improper communication with the rest, till they were all examined separately; which took up but little time, as the questions put to the

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others related only to the important points, on which they all agreed; for even Dick admitted, that he could not to be sure take his bible oath that he heard the inner bolt go, and should not have been so positive about it, "if that rascal Sam, that's for ever contradicting," had not provoked him to it.

Thus far her success had greatly exceeded her expectations. She had in reserve one experiment more, which she hesitated about attempting. It was nothing short of a direct effort to extort from Betty a confession of her infamy.

To play off such a trick upon such a character, with the most distant hope of success, required no small portion of address. Betty was not to be wrought upon by ordinary expedients. From the effects of a knock down blow, she would recover in an instant, if that instant was allowed her; and any attempts at worming out the truth by cross examination, notwithstanding the good ground that was

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already formed for such an attempt, would be but an hopeless endeavour.

Though the chances were so much against Barbara, she determined on the trial, and having by way of needful preparation, intimated to the surgeon and the landlady that she had some disclosures to make now, which would very much astonish them, she desired Betty to be called in.

She accosted her thus. "You little imagine, my good girl, what a dangerous situation you stand in, and before I make you acquainted with the treachery that has been practised upon you, I think it but right to tell you that I know how you was betrayed into a conduct which the goodness of your own heart would never have suffered you to be guilty of, if such an influence had not been practised upon you as the best girls in your line of life cannot always resist.

"Mr. Bearcroft has had the candor to ex-

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plain all that to me very fully, and further desired me to tell you that as he was the cause of your acting as you have done under his directions, he shall consider himself as bound in honor to support you as far as his purse can do it against any law proceedings, which he is very much afraid will be instituted against you as well as himself.

"During the time that him and me were together waiting here for the surgeon, he told me that he did not think it possible he could recover from the effects of the dreadful accident that had befallen him. He considered it as the just judgment of an offended God, who had so ordained it, that he should be caught as it were in his own springe, and that the very straw with which he had littered the yard, in order to promote the accomplishment of a most villainous design, had by a Providence, whose penetrating eye sees through the most ingenious devices of man, and whose vengeance no man can

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avoid, been made the immediate means of his punishment.

"He said he considered the hand of death as already upon him, and would patiently have staid here and resigned himself to the Almighty's will, but that he felt it would be doubling his guilt, if he did not use the few hours that were yet his, in endeavouring to overtake the lady, and to implore her forgiveness for you as well as for himself.

"With that remorse, his overcharged conscience has hurried him away to attempt what I fear he will not be able to effect. Who the lady is, or who he is himself, is nothing at all to me, but feeling as I do most sincerely for the alarming predicament in which your want of consideration has placed you, and which, as he said, was no more than an act of obedience on your part to the will and positive orders of one of your mistresses' best customers, I would advise you, as he does, and as he desired me to tell you, to

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establish the best claim you can to the lady's pardon, by all the atonement in your power.

" Your fellow-servants indeed have said enough already to wipe away most completely all stain which the lady's character could derive from the silly scheme of the well, and the shallow pretence of hearing her open the chamber door, and therefore I shall not impose on you the painful task of repeating what we are so well acquainted with already. The facts will all be committed to writing at Mr. Bearcroft's most earnest request, who said that he is sure you will be very ready to sign your name, as he intends to do himself if he lives long enough, in proof of the lady's entire ignorance of his being in the inn, till you introduced him to her after breakfast this morning.

" I have not time to say any thing further now, nor do I want you to say any thing at all, except indeed to declare whether you

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are or are not willing to follow the good advice he gives you."

The confidence with which the vile hussey stalked into the room, forsook her before Barbara had finished her first sentence; her brazen stare soon sunk into the down-cast countenance that unequivocally confessed a consciousness of guilt; by degrees her head drooped; she turned aside; at the conclusion of the admonition, she threw herself upon her knees and burst into a violent fit of crying.

Barbara opened the door of the inner room, and the rest of the witnesses came forward to behold her hypocrital display of a penitence which her callous heart was not susceptible of. The landlady, enraged beyond all bounds, then began to vociferate away, in order to shew by the force of her passion that she had not been a party to the plot.

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Her appeal was made to the rest of the servants. "Look at her! (said she), only look at the impudent slut! Can you believe it any of you, that it comes out after all that it was all a wicked scheme between her and the squire, to make you, every one of you, join to blacken the character of a lady that turns out to be as innocent as the babe unborn!

"Tell me directly, you, strumpet, what he gave you for all this? Tell me this instant or I'll be the death of you! More I'll be sworn than his bar-bill comes to, ten times over!

"Get out of my house!" giving her a push that laid her at her length along the floor. "Turn her out! lay hold of her directly! a canting, piping, snivelling sinful jade! She sha'n't stay in my house a moment!"

"No (said the ostler), if she dooes d—n

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me if I wull, or any honest heart I'll be sworn ?"

" Then why don't you drag her out ?"

In vaid did Betty supplicate the interference and protection of her monitor. Her assailants would allow of no mediation. Their comparing of notes in the inner room after being examined, prepared them to expect nothing less than they found to be the result of the affair, and not altogether insensible to the disgrace of having been implicated in the diabolical business, without her having the common honesty to let them in for any share of fee or reward, they were not less enraged than their mistress.

The rest of the maids soon found out what was going on, and were as active in collecting her things together, and in bringing down her box, as the men were in forcing her off the premises.

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The whole ceremony was concluded in a very few moments, and all that remained for Barbara to do, was to effect such a summing up with the surgeon as would be most likely to prevent any future diminuation of the weight of this body of evidence, by subsequent manœuvres on the part of Bearcroft.

To this end she frankly told him (what he would assuredly have discovered sooner or later if she had not), that her persuasion of the injured lady's innocence had induced her to work out that truth by a fiction, which otherwise perhaps might not have been obtained at all; that Bearcroft had made no such communication as she had pretended, nor had a syllable on the subject passed between them, but the information given by the lady herself had furnished ample materials for rendering such an experiment successful, and it was highly gratifying indeed to have had so respectable a witness of the triumph which it afforded to insulted virtue.

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CHAP. XIV.

BARBARA HOLDS COUNSEL WITH THE SURGEON;—THE CONCLUSION AND RESULT THEREOF.

THE surgeon applauded the arrangement and the conduct of the scheme, and agreed with Barbara, that nothing could be more obvious than that Bearcroft's pursuit had no other object than the accomplishment elsewhere of the infamous undertaking that had failed there.

Barbara told him that he not only would not overtake the lady, but, that after travelling fourteen miles of the worst cross country road in the kingdom, he would find that she did not go that way, and he would moreover find by information of the driver of a chaise, sent that way on purpose to entice him on,

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that the bearer of the letters from the lady to him, and to the landlady, was an active co-operator with her in making him the dupe of a scheme that had succeeded so well in taking him to a distance, at a time when his presence at the inn would have rendered fruitless or rather impracticable any attempt whatever to procure so sufficient a vindication of the lady's honor.

The surgeon professed the most ardent desire to stand forward at any time when called upon to perform so honorable a task as that of being a principal instrument in making known to the world the ingenious train of villanies by which a woman of virtue was so near becoming a victim to the machinations of a scoundrel.

After passing every encomium upon him for the part he had already taken, and for the still more important part which he professed himself ready to take, she requested that he would endeavour to divest himself

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for a moment of the impression he had imbibed from what he had been an eye and an ear witness to, and place himself as well as he could, in the situation of those, who without such unerring means of forming an opinion on the subject, would have nothing to guide their decision, but the scandalous and ruinous reports on the one hand, which had no doubt been received and credited with avidity, as all such reports are; and such a refutation on the other hand, as might well be set forth on the ground of the disproof they had established.

She observed that, before he could qualify himself to answer properly such a question as she had to put to him, it would be necessary for him to recollect the reluctance with which people listen to the denial of slanders, in which every one feels somewhat implicated who has contributed to their circulation; the proof of which is, that when they are established beyond all possibility of doubt to have been founded in falsehood, the first

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feeling of those who had believed the rumour, and given currency to it, is to justify themselves to themselves, as well as to their friends, for having been instrumental to the propagation of injurious falsehoods.

Some urge the credit of the person they heard it from; others rest their vindication on the number of witnesses to the alledged fact, and the little likelihood of their being all mistaken; some plead one excuse, and some another, but they all manifest the discomfiture they feel in being obliged to admit the tale to have been a false one. This gives them a sort of interest in the continuance of the rumour, forbids their inclining to a ready belief of any contradiction that is set up; induces them to scrutinize every point of the counter assertion, and to discredit it altogether, if the way, perhaps the imperfect way in which it reaches them, admits of any plausible pretext for withholding their assent.

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She reminded him that Dick the postillion, having taken Betty's word for the noise which he said was occasioned by the inner bolt of the bedchamber door, though he had not heard it himself, was so irritated at Sam's questioning the fact, that he did not scruple to confirm it by an oath. If instead of his being gently and artfully nursed into such a recollection and acknowledgment of the truth, and being made to feel that her object had been to make a good lad like him the dupe of her wicked schemes; if instead of being taken to so immediately, he had been left to himself for a few weeks, or a few days only, during which he would have told the story over so many times and to so many different people, as almost to have made it difficult for him to doubt the truth of it himself, the probability is that even in giving his testimony upon oath in a court of justice, he would have stuck to the same story with as much tenacity and confidence as he did in the first instance.

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"If all those who have heard and repeated, and the many more who will hear and repeat the shocking story of this lady's dishonour, could have the same opportunity that you and I have had (said she), like us they probably could not have resisted the conviction we feel; but that cannot be; the facts we are acquainted with will be detailed in a thousand different ways. Those to whom you relate them yourself, will all in different ways vary in their repetitions; and besides the possible disadvantages that may arise from errors of this description, it will be every where met with the hesitation, caution, and doubt which arises from the unwillingness to unsay what they have before represented as a true story.

"To be obliged to confess even that one has been imposed upon, is an unpleasant, and to many it is a mortifying thing; and it is on these grounds that we must calculate the chance of rendering contradiction effective.

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But this is not all: Bearcroft will most assuredly persist in the truth of the rumour; the severe treatment bestowed on his wretched accomplice, the discarded chambermaid, will make her a willing instrument in his hands. When he learns, as he certainly will, that she did not utter a single syllable in confirmation of his guilt, and that we draw our conclusions from nothing but her downcast looks and her tears, he will hearten her up to declare, that she was only silent, because she did not know who she had to deal with; that she thought that on such an occasion, and under such circumstances, there was more safety in holding her tongue, and that her bursting into tears was merely a trick to terminate without saying any thing, that attack upon her integrity, which she had not the courage, single handed, to combat to her satisfaction; that she saw they had been all bribed to league against her, and did not chuse to enter the lists against such odds, knowing that the time would come, when she could speak the truth boldly, under a protection that

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would enable her to maintain it without fear."

All this, and perhaps more than then occurred to them, was to be apprehended. His determined mind, and infernal spirit, incapable of fear, and regardless of any consequences either here or hereafter, would stop at nothing, and he could perceive at once, that if he and his accomplice united firmly to maintain that he actually did pass the night with the lady, and that his wicked agent went into the room and saw them bedded together, there existed no earthly means whatever of disproving the abominable lie.

"Now, sir, (said she) it is with all these necessary considerations before you, that I would consult your sober judgment on this important question, namely, what will it be most adviseable for the lady to do? What, if she was your sister would you think it best to counsel, for the restoration of her fame, and to undo the mighty mischief by which

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she is at this moment reduced almost beneath the pity of mankind?"

"If, sir, (replied the surgeon) you had demanded my opinion, without enlightening my understanding as you have done, by a prescience which both excites my admiration and corrects the errors of a premature judgment, I should at once have said, that fortified as we are by the means of conviction we have acquired, the best step to be taken, would be that which would give the speediest publicity to a true statement of facts, and I would have recommended an appeal to the public through the medium of the newspapers, with your name and my own subscribed to a minute detail of what we have witnessed.

"In addition to that I should have advised the immediate commencement of such a prosecution at law as would have brought all the parties together face to face, that her innocence and his villany should be indelibly

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confirmed by the sacred fiat of a British jury.

" I however see with a degree of painful emotion, that to pursue such a course would only be to invite to fresh triumphs the most specious villain that ever disgraced the human character. As the magnitude of his atrocity renders all earthly powers of punishment inadequate to his crimes, so does the subtle and satanic arrangement of his hellish plots baffle all human means of their effectual exposure to the world.

" I can contemplate no means of attempting to sustain her cause that does not threaten to make her ill-merited disgrace still more notorious. If premature endeavours to vindicate her fame do not force him forward, he certainly has every reason at present to wish for a speedy oblivion to the subject; but if he is attacked, he, like the night robber who is discovered, and about to fly without his booty, will turn to defend himself, and will

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not hesitate to effect it by the commission of a greater crime.

"No, sir; if the lady is wise, or well advised, she will resort to no public means of righting herself just now. The consciousness of her own innocence can alone afford her consolation, till circumstances more favorable to her cause, admit of her appealing to the world with better founded hopes of success than can be reasonably entertained at present.

"No rumours float long, that are not buoyed up by ill-judged efforts for their subsidence. We can assert her innocence to her immediate connexions and to the narrow circle of our own friends; but even that must be done cautiously, and further than that it will be unsafe to go."

She expressed herself most decidedly of his opinion, and then told him that she considered it one of the heaviest afflictions of her

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life, that the indispensible necessity of her hastening on to London, rendered it utterly impossible for her to fly as fast and as immediately as possible to her family, though probably it could not be in time to overtake the rumour.

"Oh, sir!" said she (with an accent that pierced his heart), did you but know as I do the weight of misery with which it has pleased the Almighty to overwhelm that worthy family, even within these few days, you would not refuse to give free scope to the sensibility of your benevolent heart. Except myself who *cannot* go, you are the only man that *can* pour balm into this fresh, this most grievous wound, which, unless some consolation be administered, will, like a pestilence, or the vengeance of heaven, sweep them away from the face of the earth.

"Let not a slight inconvenience rob you of the gratification which *such* a man as you must feel in becoming the agent of a merci-

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ful God to rescue a mother and a sister from the anguish which will otherwise bow them down with sorrow to a premature grave; a grave to which they will not sink without execrating in their last moments the innocent victim, whom they must think so guilty, if you who can so firmly assert, do not pronounce and prove the contrary to them. Is it, sir practicable?—is it—?"

He interrupted her, cordially seized her hand, pressed it with a warmth that manifested the share his heart had in the transaction, and told her it was indeed a happy errand for any man to go upon; that the distance was no objection, as he happened to have no professional duties just then, that made his absence for a day or two, of any sort of consequence; and that if she would give him that sort of introduction which as a friend to the family she no doubt could do with propriety, and without which his task would be a very awkward one to perform, he would set off immediately.

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He rang the bell to order a chaise to be got ready whilst he stept home to apprize his family of his departure. There was a chaise, but no horses, as there had been a great demand for them that day. To obviate this difficulty, she ordered a pair of those that were attached to her own chaise, to be taken off and put to his, confident that she ran no risk of Bearcroft's returning in any time that could enable him to overtake her. She then took from the landlady a receipt for the full amount of the expense of horses, drivers, and turnpikes that the surgeon's journey would require; and wrote to her sister, as follows:

"MY DEAR SISTER,

"I know not how to address you because I know not whether the voice of slander which flies swifter than the wind, may or may not have conveyed to your ears before you can receive this, the shocking tale which makes it necessary. I shall therefore say

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little more than that I leave to the bearer the task of unfolding the mystery if it has not reached you, and of easing your mind if it has. He will state to you the particulars of a detestable plot, by which that arch villain, Bearcroft, confederated with a miscreant chambermaid at this inn to entrap me to my undoing.

"I avoided the personal violence that was meditated, by escaping out of the chamber window disguised in a suit of Fortescue's clothes, which providentially were in the cloak-bag I took charge of when I left you.

"I availed myself of my extraordinary talents and powers (so familiar to you, though known to very few besides yourself), and have passed unsuspected through some scenes of considerable hazard.

"The gentleman who bears this believes me to be a man, and you must not undeceive

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him. He hastens to you and my dear mother, with the humane design of fortifying your minds against any reports that may be spread to my disadvantage, by convincing you of truths, which he alone is capable of maintaining. He is a surgeon of this place, and his behaviour on this occasion entitles him to the largest meed of gratitude that our joint hearts can bestow.—

"The circumstances that preceded the facts which this gentleman will relate to you, must form part of a letter which I shall write to you from London. The necessity of my hastening from this place admits not of my saying more at present, than that I am your affectionate sister,

"BARBARA MARKHAM."

"My dress will of course impress the bearer with a persuasion that I am of the military profession, and the name I have assumed is that of Captain *Franks*."

She sealed this letter up in a double cover; she sealed up likewise the landlady's receipt

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beforementioned, with a few lines subscribed G. Franks, and the surgeon not being returned, she got into her chaise, stopt at his door, and without alighting, told him that she had only to request further that he would drop the latter as he went by, and allow the lady to whom it was addressed a few minutes to peruse it, before he introduced himself, which she would be able to do whilst he alighted at the house of entertainment a very little way beyond their residence.

In the other cover, she said there was a little memorandum for him to run his eye over, before he set off, then with an affectionate pressure of the hand, and an assurance that she could never forget or sufficiently acknowledge his goodness, she set off on her way to London.

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CHAP. XV,

OR CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS. IN GUARDING AGAINST A HIGHWAYMAN, BARBARA FALLS IN WITH A GAMESTER. SHE ARRIVES IN LONDON TOO LATE TO MEET WITH FORTESCUE;—CONTEMPLATES THE SINGULAR AND DISTRESSING SITUATION OF HER AFFAIRS;—RESOLVES ON CONTINUING THE MALE ATTIRE, UNDER THE NAME OF FRANKS, AND AS SUCH, CULTIVATES A FURTHER ACQUAINTANCE WITH HER TRAVELLING COMPANIONS, CAPTAIN AND MRS. OAKLY.

THE day was closed sometime before she arrived at the verge of Hounslow-heath, where she overtook a post-chaise, in which were a lady and gentleman, whose progress had been checked by the lady's fears in consequence of a robbery committed on the heath about half an hour before.

She was entreated to halt, and a conference took place which ended in what was deemed the best arrangement for reconcil-

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ing the lady to the necessity her companion was under of pursuing his journey to town, malgre the danger which threatened them.

Their plan was, that Barbara should quit her own chaise, and take a corner in theirs by way of doubling the lady's safeguard, or at least diminishing her dreads, by the additional protection it seemed to afford in case of their being attacked.

This movement was to the full as agreeable to the lady *en culottes* as it was to her female companion, and it was settled that the empty chaise, with the glasses up, should drive close abreast of the other, in order to excite intimidation by the sort of battle array which so connected a force indicated.

Whether these precautions contributed or not to the desired effect, is of little consequence, as they reached Hounslow unmolested.

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The conversation of the lady and gentleman proved very agreeable, and it was resolved that as chance had thus thrown the party so unexpectedly together they would not separate till they got to London, where they arrived at a very late hour. Captain Oakly and his lady were to be set down at a respectable hotel in the neighbourhood of St. James's, where they assured Barbara, that if the lateness of the hour would make a bed acceptable, she would meet with every accommodation and comfort.

Nothing could suit her better. They supped together, and the agitation of spirits she had endured, added to the bodily fatigue and exertion which she had undergone in various ways, threw her into a profound sleep till the breakfast hour next morning.

She lost no time in enquiry after Fortescue, but the result of her enquiries afforded her no satisfaction. He had been

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obliged to quit London a very few hours after he arrived there, and his agent had that morning received advices by the post, which stated that he was but just in time to get on board before the fleet set sail.

Here then was an end of all those hopes of benefit which she reckoned on deriving from the counsel of one whom she knew to be most competent to advise her, and on whose more than brotherly affection and integrity she had the firmest reliance.

She went back to the hotel. She there found herself alone and at leisure for reflection, for the first time since the wretchedness of her condition had been so cruelly augmented by the villany of Bearcroft. She endeavoured to look at her situation with coolness and fortitude, but the more earnestly she contemplated her prospects, the more aggravated were her sensations; till at length her firmness forsook her entirely, and she burst into a violent flood of tears.

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It no doubt has been understood from what has been already said, that Barbara was not of the order of beings among whom the weaknesses of the sex were predominent. Relieved by the flow of her tears, she soon began to recover her spirits, to regain her fortitude and to reflect with something like complacency on the absolute necessity of coming to some conclusions or other, that were suitable to the situation in which she then stood.

She felt it to be of no small import, circumstanced as she was, that her extraordinary natural qualifications, matured and confirmed as they were already by the occasional habit of exercising them, enabled her if it should become expedient, to lay aside altogether the external characteristics of her sex, and she considered the consequences of so doing with the greater earnestness, because she deemed it the most effectual means of defeating the vigilance with which

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Bearcroft would assuredly attempt to ferret her out.

Nothing was so much an object with her at that period, as to encourage the speediest forgetfulness in the public mind of the reports then spread to her disadvantage; nothing could tend more to revive and keep them alive, than any conflict between her and Bearcroft, and therefore to avoid that for some time to come at least, was of the greatest consequence.

Nothing could more effectually facilitate his means of getting at her, than her seeking an asylum amongst any of her own relations, for there he would make his first enquiry, and to keep up a correspondence with them even by letter would not be safe, because schooled as the accomplished villain was in all the iniquitous means of pursuing his object, he would find ways of making it difficult if not impossible to carry on a correspondence even by the public post in any di-

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rection, for any length of time, without its leading to a discovery that might be fatal to her peace of mind for ever.

She had no doubt but that if by any means he could discover her retreat, he would treat her as the wanton who having already sacrificed to his libidinous desires, had no right to claim or to receive protection from any one but him.

Relying on the evidence of his vile accomplice to this effect, he would not scruple to invade the sacred sanctuary of her bedchamber, if he could find out where she slept, or proceed by any brutal means to the accomplishment of his detested purpose wherever he could find her, or under whatever circumstances.

Confident in his own powers of personal defence, he would brave any dangers that threatened even his life in such an attempt; and as for the avenging arm of the law, he

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had fortified himself against that completely, by the perjuries which no doubt he would keep his confederate at hand to commit at any time.

From all these considerations she concluded, that safety was to be found in concealment, and in concealment only; but how it was possible to effect that for any length of time, drawing, as her finances were to a state of exhaustion, and destitue as she felt herself to be of future resources, she was quite at a loss to foresee.

Her confidence in herself was however so far resumed as to enable her now to look stedfastly at the prospect in its worst point of view, without being appalled or even discouraged.

She was in this temper of mind when a message was brought from Captain and Mrs. Oakly, to say that if the gentleman was not otherwise engaged, they were then sitting

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down to dinner, and would be happy in his company.

She accepted the invitation, and sent word that *Captain Franks* would wait upon them directly.

Her occasion for sustaining that character during a considerable part of the remainder of the narrative, makes it necessary to wave the female appellation altogether, and to apply to her that of the opposite sex exclusively, when she is not alone.

The invitation was very acceptable to poor Franks. It promised to afford a seasonable diversion to that serious cast of thought which required relief; it opened a prospect of forming new acquaintances in the new character, which necessarily precluded all the old ones.

She foresaw that in sitting down *en garcon* to dine amongst strangers, some precaution

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and some address would be necessary to go through the scene with propriety. To avoid the difficulty of declining to drink glass for glass with Captain Oakly, prudence dictated the resolution to drink no wine, and to assign as a reason that water had been the beverage prefered through life on account of an incurable aversion to wine and spirits of any kind.

Their conversation in the post chaise the night before, had partly turned upon a difference of opinion between the Captain and Mrs. Oakly respecting the game of piquet. They were maintaining their opposite opinions on the point in dispute, at the time their chaise was stopt to warn them of the highwayman, and they resumed the conversation at a more advanced stage of the journey, with a view of refering the decision of the question to the judgment of the stranger.

The manner in which that decision was pronounced, proved a perfect acquaintance

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with the game, and the conversation ended with the expression of a mutual desire to embrace the first opportunity of playing a few games together.

They were scarcely seated at dinner, when Mrs. Oakly gave the gentlemen to understand that she expected they would squire her to the opera in the evening; but Franks excused himself on the ground of a necessity he was under to avoid public places, lest he should fall in with a relation whom he had great expectations from, and who supposed him to be at a considerable distance attending to concerns which that relation had entrusted to his superintendance; but he requested that might not deprive the lady of her pleasures.

Oh! no, they both exclaimed; that was out of the question; they could go to the opera at any time, and if agreeable to Captain Franks they would employ a part of

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that evening in the engagement they had previously made to play piquet together.

This being agree to, Captain Oakly proposed a glass of wine, and on Franks's declining it, and adding, that he never drank any thing but water, he was told with a degree of solemnity that he could not just then account for, that he might rest assured the precaution was perfectly unnecessary, as the sole object of their play would be merely to amuse themselves, and at as low a stake as he chose to name.

The look which the lady exchanged with the gentleman at this moment, manifested that they grounded on his refusal to drink wine, a persuasion of their having made some discovery The conversation however took another turn; they passed a very agreeable evening together, during which they played at a variety of different games, wherein Captain Franks' superior skill excited no small degree of admiration.

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On parting at bedtime, it was agreed they should breakfast together the next morning, and they separated with expressions of the mutual obligation incurred by the contributions each party had made towards the agreeable evening they had passed.

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CHAP. XVI.

OAKLY UNFOLDS HIS CHARACTER, AND SCHEME OF LIFE, IN WHICH HE INVITES FRANKS TO A PARTNERSHIP.—SHOCKING EFFECTS OF THE ASCENDENCY OF RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITES OVER WEAK MINDS, AS ALSO OF THE UNQUALIFIED SEVERITY OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN.

MRS. OAKLY having retired soon after breakfast, a conversation commenced between the gentlemen, which was equally interesting and unexpected.

It opened with a variety of observations on the part of Captain Oakly, which obviously composed a studied introduction to a premeditated and more important conclusion.

He began by remarking that, though Franks was as yet but young in life, he appeared to have been already thrown into

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situations that had afforded him opportunities of making rapid strides in his acquirements.

Franks did not understand this.

It is plain, sir, said Oakly, that you (as well as myself, and indeed most men, more or less), have about you a something mysterious which prudence perhaps, perhaps a more compulsory motive forbids your unveiling.

Franks began to be alarmed, and the confusion he felt occasioned so sudden and so glowing a flush in his countenance, that his companion, who mistook it for symptoms of rising choler, entreated him to be assured that in what he had said and in what it was still further his intention to say, he meant not the slightest disrespect; that if when his purpose began to be a little understood, it should be too repugnant to the feelings of Captain Franks to admit of his being heard

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to the end, he had only to say so, and the subject should be instantly dropt.

"I run no small hazard (said Oakly) in the experiment I am about to make, because the unreserved disclosure of my own character, on which I mean to ground my claim to your confidence, may produce an effect the very contrary to that I have in view, namely, the giving an early maturity to the attachment, I hope I may say the mutual attachment, which has grown out of the events of the other evening, and the laying such a foundation for a permament connexion, as is seldom rendered less durable by the cement of an advantageous interest.

"But before I speak out (said Oakly), I could wish to receive from you an assurance that as nothing I have to say is *meant* to offend, you will not *be* offended, even if it fail to meet the cordial reception I am anxious for its being favored with; and I have still further to hope that you will pa-

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tiently listen till I have concluded; for whether the result of the conversation be agreeable to my wishes or not, I should be hurt in the extreme if an abrupt termination should deprive me of any countervailing advantages in the sequel, which the very commencement of my address may render necessary to my justification."

Poor Franks, whose great dread was that Oakly had either actually discovered or at least strongly suspected the sexual concealment which it was so necessary to maintain, expected nothing less than that all this formality of preface would lead to a declaration of that discovery or suspicion, and be followed up perhaps with proposals of a domestic arrangement in which the repudiation of Mrs. Oakly would be a leading article; for she had incautiously suffered it to transpire that their union had not been ratified at the altar, and still more indiscreetly they had expressed with inconceivable *sang froid* their mutual willingness to separate when-

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ever it could be done to their joint convenience.

Hence, the "something mysterious" which Oakly had so emphatically hinted at; his professed earnestness to "give an early maturity to the attachment which he hoped was mutual," and his already expressed hopes of "laying a foundation for a permanent connexion," admitted of no other construction in Franks's mind than that which was so natural to his situation.

Recollecting, however, that none of those hints had been thrown out, which assuredly would have escaped his lips or his eyes, if Oakly knew, or even strongly suspected the fact, and feeling fortitude enough to impose on so quiet a character as he was, an immediate silence, if it turned out that he merely suspected,—the resolution was instantly taken to let him proceed, and it was taken with the less hesitation, on reflecting that if the case actually stood as Franks ap-

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prehended, nothing could more effectually tend to confirm Oakly's suspicions, than a timed shrinking from the test he seemed to have meditated.

"It was my misfortune (said Oakly) to have a father whose anxiety to make his son better than those of his neighbours, and whose injudicious manner of setting about it, has thrown me eventually into a line of connexions and a course of life that is seldom resorted to but in cases of necessity.

"He was a very passionate man, and the severity of his corrections was extreme.

"He was strangely misled by the pastor of a religious sect, whose infernal influence over the weak man's mind, made him deem the most venial errors of youth, necessary occasions for the exercise of the greatest cruelty.

"He was taught that he could no way atone so effectually for his own sins, as by en

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deavouring to prevent similar failings on the part of his son; that the natural sinfulness of our nature was only to be subdued by dealing forth heavy punishments for the smallest faults in early life, whereby the individual would gradually acquire from the frequency and extent of his sufferings, such a conviction of the original baseness of his nature, which made so much painful exertion on the part of a parent necessary for its expiation, as would subdue and humiliate his spirit for the remainder of his days to that just, proper and necessary sense of his own unworthiness, which was essential to the regeneration by which alone his soul could be redeemed; that however severe the sufferings of the body appeared to be, it was the parent's duty when inflicting them, to recollect that it was the likeliest means of rescuing the soul from everlasting sufferings of a much more dreadful kind; and that from that recollection it became him to acquire fresh vigor and a more animated determination not to relax in his performance

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of the important duty; that the measure of punishment was not to be regulated by the apparent magnitude of the fault, but offence of the most trifling kind was to be considered as an indication of the malevolent design of Satan to maintain a possession which could only be expelled or disturbed in youth by the corporal punitions which an all-seeing power made it the father's duty to apply as often as the existence of a devil was manifested by the commission of faults of any kind or of any degree.

"He was made to believe that the more he suffered himself from the excess of his severities to me, the more effectually did his exertions tend to his own atonement, and as he became at length too familiar with these habitual chastisements to feel any remorse himself from the application of immoderate severities to me, the deluded man, for the sake of his own soul as well as mine, became so enthusiastic in the performance of this duty at last, as to make himself the detesta-

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tion and me the pity of the neighbourhood.

"The sole view of his arch deceiver in all this, was to alienate his affections from me altogether, as the likeliest way of diverting his wealth into another channel, and he succeded most completely.

"When I grew too big a boy to be so castigated, he put me away from him as one of whom the devil had too much hold to be dislodged by all his pious endeavours.

"A brother of his saw to the finishing my education, and procured me a commission in the army. He had children of his own to provide for, and of course could do no more for me. So much or rather so little of my father's property as the chief of his conventicle had not extorted from him during his life under numerous pretences of charity to which it never was applied, he bequeathed to the hypocrite by will at his

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death, to be disposed of in charitable donations agreeable to any arrangement he thought best.

" The idleness and the dissipation of a military life in time of peace, is dangerous in the extreme to a young man who has no protectors or advisers; no one to look after or care about him; and it led me into indiscretions which obliged me to part with my commission.

" Destitute of prospect as of means, my necessities overcame the honorable dispositions of my mind, and to procure subsistance I became a gambler.

" I had some qualifications that made me a desirable recruit to a knot of scoundrels who were associated together for the purpose of committing robberies not cognizable by the law. My connexion with them soon made me an adept in the profession, but I have long since withdrawn myself from the

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desperate society which first initiated me in its mysteries.

"My spirit is not daring enough to admit of my engaging in enterprizes that are founded in premeditated and positive dishonesty. I have experienced that as a successful student of De Moivre, my calculation of the fair chances alone, gives me such an advantage as affords me a competent maintenance, without attempting the more rapid gains that are to be acquired by the detestable and dangerous schemes which are the daily practice of notorious black-legs.

"I have thus, in the course of the Bath season that is just closed, picked up a sufficiency to enable me to live very comfortably at least for a considerable time to come, but my disinclination to herd with even the more respectable of the professors of my own plan whose attendance on the fashionable play-tables for years past, makes them objects of suspicion, makes me desirous of

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shrinking from too close a connexion with them.

"The nature of the pursuit however is such, that there is little to be done without associates. There is a characteristic shyness about young men of fortune, that makes them unwilling to lay bets with a stranger who always wins, and that constitutes the necessity of being provided with an honorable confederate to whom one may occasionally lose a few stakes without any actual diminution of the trading stock. The doing so to a hacknied frequenter of the tables, excites suspicion instead of repressing it, and the advantages to be derived from placing a new face in such a station, seldom fail to be considerable, if the business be managed with address.

"And now, sir, I am coming to the point, which obliges me to remind you, that you have promised me not to be offended at what I have to propose. I have strictly

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fulfilled the condition on which I grounded my claim to your candor, by having thus frankly thrown my mask aside.

"That there is something mysterious about yourself, I am strongly inclined to believe, but of what nature I have not penetration enough to aid me in forming a conjecture. Your refusing to drink any wine is so common a thing with gentlemen of my profession when they have the most distant idea of having fallen in with a pigeon, whose plucking may require them to retain an unenfeebled possession of all their faculties, as to have occasioned that significant exchange of glances between Mrs. Oakly and me, which I saw you not only observed, but was very sensibly struck with.

"The superior judgment you manifested in the several games at which we played, convinces me that if you really are unskilled in the more abstruse knowledge of the profession, you are so eminently well

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qualified for being soon perfected, as to do away all doubt of your speedily becoming one of its greatest ornaments.

"To this, sir, I have only one observation more to add, and that is, that if it is a subject on which you are desirous of reflecting before you favor me with your reply, we will postpone it to a future hour."

Franks gladly availed himself of this hint; and having promised to meet them again at dinner time, retired in haste under a pretence of business that required immediate attention.

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CHAP. XVII.

BARBARA'S REFLECTIONS ON OAKLY'S PROPOSAL, WHICH SHE FINALLY ACCEDES TO;—WRITES A FAREWELL LETTER TO HER SISTER, AND WHOLLY ABANDONS THE FEMALE CHARACTER.

BARBARA'S first feeling was that of extreme satisfaction at the conversations having taken a turn so completely different from what she had apprehended; and the apprehension was so strong upon her, that it was not till Oakly had got very near to a conclusion, that she could perceive any reason to diminish her fears.

She expected that the detailed account he gave of himself would end with a declaration of such being the man whose greatest happiness it would be to throw himself at her feet; and it was no small relief to her to

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find, that the partnership he was desirous of forming, was of so different a description.

With regard to the proposal itself, she was at a loss to know how to set about considering it. It certainly did most opportunely point out a way of surmounting one of her greatest difficulties, namely, that of procuring means for her subsistence, which, in the event of her finally resolving not to return to her friends till it could be done under less dangerous circumstances, there was no prospect of doing in any manner whatever.

But ought even that consideration, important as it was, to induce her to descend to so dishonorable, so vile a course of life? Looking forward as she did to the hope of one day resuming her real character, ought it not to be a fixed resolution with her to yield to any privations, and to suffer even the extremities of want, rather than deprive herself of the power of proving at a future

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period, that the days of her voluntary retirement had been passed in a way that could reflect no discredit upon them or dishonor upon herself?

A question however here suggested itself, whether an obscurity that would wholly shut her out from the commerce of the world, might not expose her in the eyes of the malevolent, at a distant period, to suspicions, which could not so well attach to her, if under cover of the assumed disguise, she became so constantly the object of daily observation in any one circle, as to qualify the individuals who composed it, for speaking decidedly to the tenor of her life and confirmed habits during that time.

She recollected also that the principle on which Captain Oakly professed to act, was that of an entire dereliction of all dishonorable practices, and a dependence for success on nothing more than the fair advantage which a man with a profound knowledge is

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entitled to exercise over the less informed; who knowingly combat their superiors in skill, with the hopes of vanquishing them by the irresistable influence of a better luck.

In further aid of the impulse which those thoughts gave to an acquiescent answer, a fresh idea occured which proved decisive.

That she ever could be wrought upon to be either an active or a passive agent in a dishonorable transaction, was utterly impossible, and if without violating that sacred principle she yielded to the invitation and became an associate in such scenes, it struck her that opportunities might arise which would enable her from her necessary knowledge of characters, to give now and then such a timely warning to inexperienced youth as might avert from a worthy family the anxiety, if not the ruin with which such events are pregnant.

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Such were the grounds on which she formed her conclusion. It relieved her from a considerable portion of the difficulty she had previously contemplated in performing the painful but necessary task of writing to her sister, which she proceeded to do forthwith.

She first gave her a more particular account of her conversation with Bearcroft on the morning of her departure from home, than she had deemed necessary at the time. The occurrances at the inn which the surgeon had undertaken to relate with all the minuteness of detail, very considerably abridged the performance of that part of the task; but still much remained to be told of the proceedings there; of her escape; of her subsequent arrangements that morning, and the effects of them.

On all these points she bestowed a degree of precision and perspicuity which could not

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fail to make her sister perfectly acquainted with the whole.

She was at considerable pains to recapitulate deliberately and pointedly all the arguments which she had pressed upon the surgeon's attention preparatory to the important question she afterwards put to him respecting what course or line of conduct it would be best for the injured lady to pursue, and for her friends to recommend to her.

The surgeon had promised to strengthen those arguments by every additional force he could bestow upon them, in order to convince Miss Markham that the peculiar circumstances of her sister's very extraordinary case required, not only that she should abstain from all premature attempts to vindicate herself to the world, but that she must keep aloof from her friends, and for a time avoid even all correspondence with them, lest so subtle a villain should from

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either of those dangerous expedients derive means to give her further annoyance. The most important of these points she repeated in her letter, and then summed up the whole in the following terms:

"Thus then you see, my dearest sister, how imperious the necessity is that requires of me to relinquish for a time all the consolations I might derive from your tender and affectionate communications, and (which is a vast aggravation to my sorrows), it obliges me to forego the aleviating effects which I otherwise might have experienced in the exertion of all my powers to administer comfort at so awful a crises to you and my afflicted mother.

"I can be at no loss to know how you will dispose of yourselves, because my aunt's mansion is the only asylum you have to retire to. She feels for you and for my revered mother also an affection that will make you

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both welcome partakers of what she has; but having nothing more to divide with you than her annuity which she has hitherto found not more than equal to her accustomed style of living, she will suffer enough in the retrenchments you will occason her to make, without any further sacrifices in favor of a niece she never liked, and who is too much under the influence of the pride of poverty ever to hazard the consequences of asking favors so little likely to be granted with the grace that alone could make them acceptable.

"Let me conjure you, my dear sister and my unhappy mother also, to abstain from augmenting your own sufferings by painful reflections, or distressing apprehensions respecting me.

"You know that I am fruitful in resources, and I have the satisfaction to add that my scheme of life is already fixed, for some time to come at least; though on that

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head I can say so more now than that I contemplate my prospect with all the serenity of consolation.

. . . . . .

"It promises to add nothing to my present anguish, which is great indeed on account of your calamitous condition and my mother's, and I beg you to honor me with all your accustomed confidence when I assure you, that it will furnish no cause for future regrets, when in happier times you shall again embrace your affectionate sister.

"BARBARA MARKHAM."

Having committed her letter to the post with her own hands, she prepared to dress for dinner.

Fortescue's portmanteau contained an entire assortment of such articles of apparel, linen, &c, as he had deemed sufficient for a fortnight's visit, and of course afforded her an ample present supply. The mark which they bore of the initials of his name had

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governed her in the choice of the name she assumed to wear with them.

Her spirits had been greatly affected during the performance of the painful duty she had discharged in writing to her sister, but she presently recollected that to indulge distressing reflections on the past, would tend only to disqualify her for sustaining the arduous task she was about to impose upon herself for the future, and her good sense dictated to her the necessity of banishing from her mind as immediately and as effectually as possible, a retrospect so incompatible with the tranquillity she stood in need of.

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CHAP. XVIII.

FRANKS CONCLUDES THE TREATY WITH OAKLY, AND ATTENDS HIM TO A PLAY-TABLE. EASE OF ADMISSION TO CERTAIN HOUSES OF A *DEMI CARACTERE* IN HIGH LIFE;—THE REPROACHFUL HABITS OF THE UPPER CIRCLES OF FASHION.—FRANKS BECOMES A BLACKLEG;—HIS REASONS;—HIS CONDUCT AS ONE OF THE FRATERNITY.—THEIR ADDICTION TO OTHER VICES.—DANGER OF MASQUERADES.—ADMONITIONS TO THE YOUNGER SISTERS OF VIRTUE.

AS soon as Mrs. Oakly retired after dinner, Captain Franks entered without hesitation upon the expected reply.

He began by telling Oakly that the undisguised manner in which he had disclosed so much more of his own life and conduct than was necessary to the proposal which terminated the point at which they broke off, was well calculated to beget the confidence which was necessary to the end he had in

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view, and for the frankness of his communications he begged leave to offer his best thanks.

He then assured him that in declining to drink wine, he was wholly uninfluenced by any such motive as had been suspected, for that his connexions and habits of life had never afforded him the slenderest opportunity of even entertaining a thought or conceiving an idea in any way related to such a subject; that the judgment and skill in different games which he had spoken of in terms of such high commendation, were the mere result of frequent practice in a family and circle of friends who made cards their principal amusement; that he never made a bet in the course of his life, and never played for so high a stake as a single guinea.

"If, continued he, I had given my answer to your proposal without bestowing upon it the various reflections which have since occupied my mind, it would assuredly

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have been a direct negative; but there is in truth a mystery in the present situation of my affairs, which whilst it denies to me the pleasure of unfolding myself with the candor of which you have given so unequivocal an example, disposes me to accept your invitation; but I do it under a persuasion that it will not impose upon me at any period or under any circumstances the slightest obligation to forfeit that honor which is inseperable from my existence."

He conjured Oakly not to deceive him in that respect, assuring him that, if he did, all friendship, all intercourse between them must cease, the moment he found himself liable to have an unworthy action even expected from him.

Oakly's sole object was to intice him on, and to leave the future conduct of his pupil to the chance of events, which often renders men incapable of acting up to the spirit of their own resolutions.

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He felt no difficulty in repeating to his Tyro, that it was the experience he had had of the ease with which a man might be an advantageous frequenter of a play-table without acting dishonorably, that had attached him to the practice after he had resolved on such a systematic habit of proceeding there as he had already described.

These conditions repeated and perfectly well understood between them, the agreement was ratified by a cordial shake of the hand, and the expression of a mutual hope that neither party would ever have occasion to be dissatisfied with it.

Completely grounded as Franks was in the soundest principles of the game of whist, it was of no small consequence to Oakly to know, that without the aid of any unfair advantages, the skill of the one in play, and the knowledge of the other in the important task of calculating the odds, would be sufficient to make their partnership very pro-

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ductive; and so it turned out, for in the course of a few weeks, during which time Franks did nothing but play, and the management of the bets engaged Oakly's attention only, they actually divided a very handsome sum.

Their general management even when both stakes and bets ran low, procured considerably more than the amount of their ordinary expenses, and when the spirit of adventure in the less experienced, afforded more flattering opportunities, the extra benefits to the firm of Oakly and Franks were often great.

The master's instruction soon made the pupil as well acquainted with the real characters of all the frequenters of the play-tables as he was himself, and it was matter of no small surprize to him to find that some of those who to all outward appearance were men of fashion and high connexion, and who seemed to keep at the greatest distance

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from the notorious blacklegs, were their immediate and zealous associates, and the decoy birds by whom their best prey were inticed into the toil.

There was however one discovery that afforded him still more surprize, and that was, that some men who were of the higher order in point of rank and family connexion, did not scruple to take advantages for which a known blackleg would have been kick'd out of company, whip'd off a race-course or duck'd in a horse-pond. This charge, heinous as the offence is, has been brought home to individuals of very exalted station indeed, and Newmarket has not yet recovered the shock which its prosperity received some years ago from instructions which the first character on the course was discovered to have given his rider, in order to disable his horse from wining an easy race on which a great many score thousands had been laid, and very high odds in his favor.

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With such examples before us, is it at all surprizing that those of a rank less conspicuous, seek to benefit themselves by arts which however base, are not denied the sanction of such elevated proselytes to vice and dishonor?

There is however such a degree of fashion now blended with gambling institutions in the higher circles, as makes it scarcely possible for men or women either of any condition to keep out of their vortex. Women of the highest titles with daughters, growing up under them, do not disdain to hold their routes alternately in succession, and make a sort of common cause with professed gamblers, and much of the same company that is met at the Dutchess of ——'s; at the the Marchioness of ——'s; and at the Countess of——'s; will be found, together with the Dutchess, the Marchioness and the Countess, at the route of Mr. and Mrs.— —— !!!

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That such practices should obtain among families of *demi caractére* in high life, is bad enough, but some of them being shut out from the society which is suitable to their rank, by the court etiquette which denies them the honors of the drawing room, they derive something of an excuse from the peculiarity of their situation.

Their *coterie* would be too thin, if their rules of admission were to be too scrupulous, and besides, it would not be an easy task to draw the line between those who should be let in, and those who should be kept out, since it is notorious that the *toute ensemble* includes every degree of practical depravity, from the venial frailty which may be denoted in the comparison by the speck of a pin's point, to the atrocity of which the blot of designation cannot be reduced to a less circumference than that of the E O table at which they play.

These places of rendezvous are not dif-

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ficult of access. A very ready admission is given at Mr. and Mrs. — — —'s, on the principle of trade. Their house is a mart; the traffic carried on there is incredible, and the transfers of property that take place are almost as numerous as those of *la foire a Francfort*. Meeting her grace, and their ladyships here, paves the way by degrees for being let in with the croud to their own parties, and that gives a passport every where.

Franks was led the whole of this round by his associate without meeting with any difficulties; but the distance at which he kept from the less scrupulous professors of the fraternity, denied to him all chance of befriending as he often wished to do, the unwary youths they devoted to destruction from time to time. Not being an admitted brother, he had no means of becoming acquainted with their secrets. He saw very plainly that they were desirous of receiving him into their clan, and he consulted Oakly

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on the practicability of taking a share in their confidence, without becoming a rascal. All that, Oakly told him, must depend entirely upon himself; but unless he meant to become a joint labourer in their vineyard, he would soon be suspected among them, and had better not try the experiment.

This however did not deter him. His object was a praiseworthy one, and he contemplated with indifference the apparent baseness of the medium through which it was to be effected.

He was but a short time initiated before he became an actor in scenes of the deepest iniquity, but he conducted himself so artfully as to awaken no suspicion in the breasts of his confederate kites, though he was ever upon the watch to frighten away their prey.

He kept a regular daily account of all his transactions. Of every guinea he won or lost he made regular entry, and he re-

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tained none that he had not acquired in the most honorable manner. These gains indeed were very trifling, compared to his share of ill acquired booty, but he anxiously sought the earliest opportunity of restoring winnings of that description to the owner, which was generally accompanied with a few lines to the following effect: "The enclosed, is one-fourth or one-eighth (as the case may be), of the money you was plundered of at ———, by a knot of unsuspected villains. You owe the recovery of this small part of your loss to the remorse of a confederate. It was his share of the booty. If you do not instantly resolve on abandoning such a course, your ruin is inevitable. Be warned, and farewell."

By such means, he contributed very much to lessen the profits of the concern, but he derived from it consolations that made him regardles of the risk he ran in the event of being discovered by his partners. That risk

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was rather of a serious nature, for among the associates there were some daring and desperate spirits, who would think little of hazarding their own lives in an attempt to sacrifice to their revenge the life of another.

Aware of the possible occasion that might occur for making a practical use of the skill which he had acquired in early days for the mere sake of exercise in the fencing art, it was a constant object with Franks to keep himself in practice, and his unremitting exertions made him a most accomplished master.

Nothing surprized him more than to find that though the fraudulent earnings of these sharks were sufficient to admit of their living expensively, and having a handsome overplus to put by against a rainy day, there was not one of the gang who did not at times encounter the greatest pecuniary distress. They were all slaves to some vice or other,

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beside that to which they were professionally addicted. They had so habituated themselves to squander profusely that which they acquired so easily, as to be unable to effect any savings out of the pluckings of the rarest pigeon of the season.

Masquerades afforded attractions which they none of them could resist, and those of them whose passion was gallantry of the grossest kind, found there the amplest gratification. Wives and daughters who left home with the purest intentions, and who were not from under the protection of their husbands or fathers all the night, have there laid the foundation of seductions that have made them victims to their folly the remainder of their lives.

The less guarded and the worse protected, fall a much easier prey; and though in this way, as well as in the professional line of gaming, it was Franks's constant object to frustrate the hopes of these destroyers

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as often as ever he could, yet it frequently happened that his interference proved ineffectual, sometimes from his obtaining too late the information that was necessary to act upon, and sometimes from the rapidity of execution with which these adepts in infamy pursued their object.

To scruples of any kind they were utterly insensible. The yielding and consent which less brutal sensualists bestow some time to obtain, were not even solicited or wished for by them. The possession of an innocent girl's person was all they desired. They had houses of accommodation so situated and so attended, as to fear nothing from the outcries of virtue in its crisis of agony. The fruit that could be had without much struggle was deemed scarce worth tasting. Resistance gave a zest to the gratification, and the excess of the enjoyment was in proportion to the difficulty with which their vile endeavours were accomplished.

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During two years that Franks was in habits of intimacy with this infernal crew, the instances of their success in these libidinous pursuits were numerous, and it not unfrequently happened that the victims of their lust were but a few hours before the moment of sacrifice, as averse to giving any sort of encouragement to improper advances, as the most virtuous of their sex. Incapable of foreseeing or suspecting that so mighty a mischief could be so near at hand, a compliance that does not seem to exceed the bounds of common politeness and good manners, betrayed them into a snare from which they never escaped till the spoiler had accomplished his object. They can scarcely see their danger till the critical moment is arrived, and the agitation of their spirits, which the instantaneous nature of the attack makes instrumental to the atchievements of the betrayer's purpose, scarcely arrives at its acme, before they are despoiled of the most valuable gift of nature to their lovely sex.

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Daughters of virtue! be never off your guard, no, not for a moment; for if you are, that moment may be fatal to you. To judge of such men by their professions is to invite the danger you wish to shun. He must be a sorry suitor who cannot make his professions acceptable to the fair, but if the sweetness of tender expressions from such wretches make any way in your credulity, and your want of caution, affords to a libertine of that abandoned cast, one favorable opportunity, you are lost for ever! The triumph of lascivious passion over a young girl's weakness, thrusts her in a moment from off the meek pedestal of virtue, and consigns her for the remainder of her days to sorrow and to shame; a disgrace to her friends, and a burthen to herself, till at last she falls a prey to remorse, and sinks, with the pity of some, the contempt of others, and the reproaches of her own conscience, into a premature grave.

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CHAP. XIX.

A MASQUERADE ADVENTURE.—THE STORY OF CICELY CLUMP; AND THE NARROW ESCAPE FOR WHICH HER SISTER ROSE WAS INDEBTED TO THE HUMANITY AND VALOUR DISPLAYED BY FRANKS AT THE IMMINENT HAZARD OF HIS LIFE.

THE chivalrous attempts of Franks to rescue damsels from the near approach of a ruin they could have no suspicion of, threatened him more than once with very serious consequences; but the sympathy which was ever kept alive by a recollection of the narrow escape Barbara Markham had at the inn, made the personal danger of those interferences a secondary consideration.

Whilst choosing a dress one evening at a masquerade warehouse, accompanied by a successful destroyer of female innocence,

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their attention was attracted by the entrance of a countryman with his wife and daughter, whose errand there was, to bargain for the hire of some disguise, under cover of which the rustic trio were desirous of becoming spectators of an entertainment which they had often read a good deal about in the country newspapers, but never before had an opportunity of seeing.

The poor ignorant fellow felt so awkwardly on the occasion, and found himself so much out of his place, that he thought it necessary to account to the fine flourishing gentleman behind the counter, for his becoming an applicant for accommodations so unsuitable to his real character and condition of life.

He told him, that that fickle jeade, Fortin, who had plaayed un a plagey number o'murrain tricks in his toime, had at last meade aal up to'n i'th' lump, by a proize i'th' lottery; and that he and his rib and Roase being

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com'd up to Lunnun to get the money, they had a moighty moind nut to go whoam again athouht zeeing a bit of every thing that wuz to be zeen awhoilst they staid.

He said, that 'twas woife Margery's whim to go to the raree-shaw at the masquereade, and as he had nut been sparing to himself in a main parcel o'ways, o'one koind and toother, a couldn't very well zay nay to ur, and zo, zir (said honest Clump), we do want a zummet or other to put about us, that we ma look a little like other voak when we da get there.

Had they gone in the precise dress they then wore, and sustained their original character, they would have formed the completest groupe in the whole assembly; but that would have been too unprofitable a hint for the shopman to give, besides which, it unfortunately happened for their future peace, that the devil had planted at poor Clump's elbow, an emmissary of evil, who would have

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baffled any attempts to deprive him of such a spoil as he saw in the blushing innocence of the lovely daughter.

Crawley (the name of Franks' companion), in order to give an air of greater plausibility and propriety to his interference, slily laid his hat aside; gave a well understood wink to the shopman, and presented himself to Clump as belonging to the warehouse.

"Do but have the goodness to step into the little room at the end of the shop, said he, and we will suit you in a moment."

Whilst they were sauntering to the spot appointed, all wonderment at the mock splendour of the dresses, and the grotesque visages of the masks that were ranged and scattered about on all sides, Crawley ordered the shopman to select some three dresses for them, of which he had got exact duplicates.

This was soon done, and after Crawley

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had assisted in attiring them, he took great pains to instruct them how they had best proceed, in order to get a safe conveyance to the scene of action, and a ready admission, without encountering the numberless impediments which he represented strangers to be liable to.

He said, that a friend or two of his own would be coming to the shop for a dress in the course of half an hour or so, and that as it was too soon to go yet, they had better stay where they were till his friends arrived, who he was sure would be very willing to go along with them, and at least, see to their being safely conducted there; after which, they would be at no loss.

Honest Clump and his woife Margery were hoighly deloighted wi'aal this koind attention, and professed a readiness to wait a much longer toime than that, for the zeake of so valuable a protection.

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Franks, who resolved on defeating the scheme, if possible, saw that his best chance of doing so, was, by becoming an actor in it himself, and accordingly he undertook to be the old woman's double, for which his size and stature were very suitable.

Crawley dispatched a messenger, with a coach, for a meretricious damsel of his acquaintance, whose figure was similar enough to that of Rose to answer the purpose; and before she arrived, Franks, who had retired to another room to dress, was completely equipped *en jupe*.

The *fille de joie* was not long getting ready, and her duplicate dress, as well as that of Franks', being carefully concealed by their dominos, they took their seats in a hackney coach at the door, and Crawley told the country folks that his friends were come, and waiting for them.

When they were in the coach, the daugh-

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ter of iniquity told the coachman that he must not drive off yet, as her papa would be there in a few minutes, and they must not go without him.

Crawley soon slipt into a similar dress to Clumps, and having thrown a domino over it, presented himself at the coach-door, enquired if his daughter was not there, and away they drove to the masquerade.

Great care was taken there to prevent Rose from being attacked by strangers, and it was thought adviseable not to carry the design into execution till night was pretty far advanced, and the gawkies began to be fatigued.

When the moment of transformation arrived, the three impostors took care to rivet the attention of their dupes to some spectacle, whilst they slipt off their dominos. Crawley insinuated himself between Rose and her father and laid hold of her hand, which she

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supposing it to be her father, rested upon his arm, and a short turn round separated her from her parent. The simple girl's representative supplied her place instantly, and poor Clump laid hold of her without any suspicion of the trick, whilst Franks getting on the other side of Rose, made it almost impossible for her to doubt that she was under the immediate protection of her father on one side, and her mother on the other.

They conducted her straight to the door, having occasion to say but little more than coame coame, let's goa, let's goa, and the saying that in a feigned voice, which they had made all the party affect as a necessary conformity to the rules of the place, enabled them to get their prize away without any difficulty or risk of discovery.

The coach was ordered to Crawley's lodgings, and they had been but a short time up stairs when he gave a hint for

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Frank's departure. He however resisted the relinquishing so readily a capture to which he deemed himself as fully entitled as his friend. Crawley with a "poo! poo! nonsense!" told him that if it would afford him any amusement to listen to the prattle of her tongue for a little while before he made his bow, he had no objections to that; but as the moments were precious, and delays, in such cases, replete with danger, he requested that his stay might be short.

This conversation was in French, after some attempts had been made to overcome the girl's first surprize, and to account to her for so wonderful a deception.

The moment they had entered the room, Crawley threw off his mask, burst into a hearty laugh, and asked her why she did not join him in the enjoyment of so excellent a masquerade trick. At first, her fright almost exceeded her wonder, but he quickly pacified her by saying that her father and

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mother were privy to it, and would be there soon to laugh with her at the success of the diverting scheme, by which she had been made to mistake two strange gentlemen for her own father and mother.

Under this persuasion, poor Rose discarded her fears, and with all the innocent simplicity of youthful ignorance, was delighted beyond expression with the manœuvre. She vow'd by all the mackins that she should never rest till she had played off a trick in turn upon veather and mither, fur meaking sic a fool o'her. She thought 'twas a better joake than aall the rest o'th'vun o'th' pleace; but she wood na' be purzueaded that sic a dainty contrivance could ever a entered thair yeads if zumbody hadn't egg'd um on to't.

Franks, availing himself of repeated expressions of regret that had fallen from Clump and Margery in the course of the night, that their dear daughter Cicily was

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not alive to partake of the wonderments; and anxious to hit upon some expedient for checking Crawley's impatience to get rid of him, he told her that her father and mother bid them not be out of humour if they should happen to stop a little behind them, adding that Rose could fill up the time by telling them all about her poor sister Cicily.

"Oh dearee me!" said she, "now doant "ee ax me, for 'tis zo mollancholy that "it ool zett us aal a crying I do assure ee."

This determined Franks not to excuse her. He said, that he did not much care about it himself, but having been made to promise that he would listen to it, and understanding that the old folks wanted to ask his advice afterwards about something relating to it, it was necessary for him to know the whole from beginning to end, in order that he might be qualified to advise them properly.

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"Well then," said Rose, "if you must ha it, you must, and the zooner I begin the zooner I shall end, zo I'll tell ee as zhort as I can for vear veather and mither zhould be here avore we be done wee't.

"You must knaa then, that zister Zicily was one o'th' zweetest loveliest maaidens that ever wur zeen in our parish, ur in ony ten parishes round about. Every body taalk'd about her; every body lov'd her zo dearly! the lads wur aall vit to go mad about her, un the prattiest wanches i'th' hundred wur acraz'd at her; un reeazon good, becaaze, thaa szhee zweet zoul could na help it, aall the zweetarts vlockt about ur as if there wuzzent another girl i'th' country. And then szhee wur as good as szhee wur pratty: szhee look'd as mild as a primroase; ur neck wur pure alliblaster; ur cheeks can be loikened to nout but an apple blossom, and you mout rainge the cherry orchard oaver and oaver athout vinding a compare vur ur lips. I defy ee to find any

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match ataal vur the straitness of her teeth, but the driven snaw wur the very emblem on um vur whoiteness. Ur eyebrows wur uz true arch'd as any raainbow, and ur aingel blue eyes vrom behind her long lashes, szhined upon ee zo modest and bashvul, and at the zeame toime zo dazzling broight, that if ee never zeed the zun dart out like az it doees in our country a'ter a szhower of an April morning, 'tis zartin zure then that I can't teach ee what zort of a zoight it wur vor ee to zee. But aall that wur nothing to ur zaft szhining vlaxen, vlauwing yare, vor the locks curled auver ur vorehead and ur zhowlders and into ur bozom in sic a zort, az to meake ee thzink that aall the rest o'ur loveliness would be little beyond the common prattiness o'th' hamblet athout that."

Unconscious of her own charms, the sweet innocent had no idea, that in painting her sister's beauties, she was giving the most accurate description of her own.

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" 'Tis two years, come lammas, zin young squoire cum'd whoam vrom travels. A vall'd in love wi ur direckly. A tould veather and mither that a never zeed ony thzing loike Zicely in aall the countries he'd been thro', and he wur resolved to ha' ur, if ould squoire cut un off wi' a szhilling.

" Veather told un nat to do that, but to ha peatience and staay a bit. A moinded un that th'ould gentleman wur a wearing out a peaace, and that they wur boath young anow to waait a turn, un noa harm done; and zoa squoire agread to that iv and so be as veather ood let un come a courting at odd toimes and by stealth as twur. And zo a did; and veather and mither boath cut and controived, as a body ma' zay, to keep the treade a going atween um athout ould squoire's mistrusting a crum o'th' matter.

" A wur a maain handsome youth for cartin. No wonder she lov'd un; but poor szweet aingel, she lov'd un to ur cost, as

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she vound at last. A purzuaded her that as thay wur to bee mon and woife, and as szhee could n't doubt o'that, szhee oaught n't if zhee lov'd he as he lov'd zhee, to denoy un any thzing.

"The poor maaid's heart wur aal iz oown, and a no zooner knaw'd that, than a wickedly took'd his vantage on't, and beasely betraayed her. A no zooner gaain'd his will than a barbarously dezarted ur; never com'd any'st th' house; went aaff awaay noabody knaw'd whither, and zo then she zickened, and poined, and weasted and withered, as a body ma' zay, till at last, wi a broaken heart, zhe died in mither's earms, vor aall the world as a lamb of a month ould dies at the ewe's tit."

The tear had started some time before, and her anguish was now so excessive as to render the concluding part of her narrative scarcely intelligible. She wept most bitterly, and when a little recovered, she with

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a degree of pathos and of passion that would have moved and almost melted any heart that was not callous as a rock of adamant, exclaimed. "Szhe is now, dear zoul, a zaint in heaven! and thouf it sadly sheames an honest vamully to ha' sic a mishap betoide it, 'tis roight for aall that to ha' the stoary tould, beceaze let mon's yearts be over zo wicked, her zuvverings, zweet innocent! ooll meake 'um zmeart zo zorely, as neaver, noa, neaver again to ha' to lay to their consciences the croime that killed ur zo cruelly in the very blossom of her innocence, and in the vull bloom of aall ur beautifulness."

Franks, with an agony of emotion, arose, and as soon as his exquisite sensibility had so far subsided as to admit of his giving utterance to his feelings, he exclaimed.—"In sins of so damning a quality *I* will neither be a principal nor an accessary:" then addressing himself to Crawley, he said, "As I would guard, not merely a valueless

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life, but the soul within me from eternal perdition, I will, at all hazards, protect this image of angel innocence from harm. I have listened to her eloquence, not as to the voice of a sister relating a sister's injuries, but as to that of a special providence, admonishing me through her, to be the agent of heaven in rescuing her from the infamy that threatens her. Proud of the office, I gladly and gratefully accept the honorable commission, and *will* restore her uncontaminated and pure, to her worthy parents, whose measure of suffering from the bitter effects of a child's seduction has been so grievously over filled already."

Crawley saw nothing in this decisive behaviour that begot in him the least inclination to forego the gratification of his lustful passion, which had been encreased by the exquisite witchery of her looks whilst she told the artless tale.

Like the proud stag in rutting time, the

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potency of his sensual propensities made him insensible alike to all obstacles. He had two swords hanging against the wainscot at opposite ends of the room. He grasped one with the rage of a lion; warned Franks that if he did not instantly retire, the life he professed to value so lightly, should be the immediate price of his temerity.

"Then be it so!" said Franks, taking down the other; "and if in such a cause I do fall; my last breath will be that of humble thankfulness to the author of my being, for his goodness in permitting me to end my days so honorably."

Crawley flew at him with most intemperate violence. Franks parried his ill directed thrusts with perfect ease, and feeling his superiority, bad him "beware! You're in my power, sir, retreat in time!"

"No!" exclaimed the brutal wretch (who

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deemed his keeping on the defensive, a proof of his fear to make a lounge), "my blade shall satiate with your blood, before I stay my hand! "Then hold it fast," said Franks, at the same moment practising with success a disarm which had long been a favorite stroke of his play.

Though discomfited, he was not disposed to yield, and he dared his generous adversary to take the chance of a second assault.

"Most willingly," said Franks, "but you shall smart for it."

He then gave full scope to all his skill. He played with him as with a novice. Instead of disarming him again, he pincked him by turns with every thrust that professors of the art occasionally display to their pupils; but, at the same time, with a careful avoidance of his vital parts; till at length exhausted with rage and pain, he sunk upon the floor.

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Franks then seized the prize he had so nobly won; told her they must go back to her parents, since they had forgot to come to them; put her into the coach, and bore her in triumph to the giddy scene from whence she had been so villanously decoyed away.

They searched in vain through all the rooms for poor Clump and Margery, but they learned from the *fille de joie* who had personated Rose, that after she had taken several turns with them, without their ever suspecting that she was not their daughter, she availed herself of a favourable opportunity to slip away; that having exchanged the domino she had worn in the early part of the evening, for one belonging to a female friend, who took charge of it at the time she threw it off, she was enabled to keep close to them without being observed, as long as they staid there.

They missed their daughter very soon

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after her representative had quitted them, and left no part of the place unexamined to recover her. They addressed every group and every individual they met, begging, for the love of mercy, that they would tell what was become of Rose. Many imagined that their lamentations were assumed, to give an encrease of ridicule to the characters they sustained, and they no where met with any sort of assistance or consolation.

At length, when they were exhausted with fatigue, and almost broken hearted for the loss of their child, this wanton caused them to be told, that their daughter had been seeking them as earnestly as they had been seeking her, but not being able to find them, she, concluding that they were gone to their inn, had a hackney coach called to the door, and set off after them. The moment they heard this, they hastened away, and by that time probably had experienced the falsehood of the information on which they withdrew.

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Though poor Rose's description of the inn was a very imperfect one, for she knew neither the name of it, or of the street it was in, Franks, with some difficulty found them out, and witnessed such an excess of affection, agitation, joy, and gratitude, at regaining her, as for a time overcame, and disabled him for accounting to them for her absence.

He told them the snare she had escaped; made them sensible of his being in the shop when they came to enquire for the dresses; explained to them his immediate discovery of his friend's wicked design upon their child, and of his resolution to assist in the plot, in order to defeat it.

When they were perfectly acquainted with the whole of the contrivance; with the manner in which it had been carried on in all its parts, and how it had been ultimately rendered abortive, the poor people were ready to devour him with caresses, and their

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tears of gratitude flowed most plenteously from sources that seemed to be inexhaustible.

They thought the least they could do would be to make the man to whom they owed more than life itself, a joint partaker with them in their lottery prize, and were not easily prevailed upon to forego that idea. They were induced at last to abandon it, on Franks's assuring them, that he had more money than he wanted, and that he had another sort of favour to ask of them, which would gratify him more completely.

He made them promise not to deny him, and then said it was to get out of town directly. He persuaded them that their daughter would not be safe even under their protection, if they remained in town one hour longer. He reminded them, that a little additional expense was now no object to them, and to get over the objection of the stages not setting off till towards even-

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ing, he made them all get into a post chaise and set off, bag and baggage to Hounslow, where the coach was to take them up as it passed by at night.

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CHAP. XX.

FRANKS REMOVES TO BATH.—SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ROOKS THERE, AND OF THEIR MODE OF DECOYING AND PLUCKING THEIR PIGEONS.—THEIR TENDER TREATMENT OF LORD A*****.

CRAWLEY was considered among the fraternity he belonged to, as a member of no ordinary consequence, and Franks concluded, that his having inflicted on him so severe a punishment for a proceeding on which they all prided themselves, would be very likely to draw down upon him the resentment of the whole knot.

The successful issue of the exploit begat no desire to have his skill put to a second trial, for independent of the hazard he might run of finding a more dexterous opponent in a second rencountre, he was well aware that no superiority of that kind was to be relied

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upon among a set of scoundrels, and he deemed it not improbable that the very wretch who might act as his second, would run him through the body whilst engaged with his principal.

In order to afford some time for the first feelings of the clan to subside a little, he resolved on withdrawing himself for the present from so dangerous a society. Oakly, who still acted up to the principle he originally professed, had withdrawn himself from Franks as a play partner, ever since he became a confidante with the notorious blacklegs; but still they had occasional intercourses of friendship with each other in town, and corresponded when at a distance.

At this period Oakly was at Bath, and that had no small weight in determining Franks to go there. It was the height of the season; the town was uncommonly full, and on his first appearance in the rooms he was recognised by some of the fraternity

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with whom he had before associated in London. They hailed his arrival, and gave him a pressing invitation to join them at a private table to which they had decoyed some pigeons of no small promise.

The business of these private tables is conducted in the following manner. A brother of the profession, who from having had the honor to bear his Majesty's commission, and still retaining the military title of major, or captain in the army, occupies a handsome and well furnished house, where elegant suppers, and the best of wines, are among the lures that tend to attract and gratify the guests.

Every thing conspires in the public rooms at Bath to facilitate the commencement of an intimacy. The ordinary civilities that are current at any table you approach, whether you make one in a sober rubber, or merely look on, lead to that sort of familiarity that paves the way to a better acquaintance.

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To have made a trifling bet or two; to have been one of a party in a game at whist, or to have indulged in the casual chat that arises from two persons standing or sitting near each other, is abundantly sufficient to authorize your being told by gentlemen of a certain description, that a select and very elegant company sup that evening at Major ——— and having promised to bring a friend in his hand, he should be very happy to have the honor of introducing you.

He then hints at the unpleasantness it is to some people not to be able to sit down to a rubber, or even to be a spectator, without being exposed to the animadversions of all one's maiden aunts, watchful guardians, and suspicious relations of every degree of consanguinity, who frequently ascribe motives to one's actions that have no foundation; that such, however, must be the event of a man's confining his enjoyments within the limits of a public room; whereas at the Major's, every man does as he likes;

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if he does not wish to play, nobody asks him; he associates with none but the most honourable characters; does as he likes, retires when he pleases, and experiences a degree of rational pleasure that makes an introduction much sought after.

It is much to be regretted, that when young men of family are at Bath with their relations, the austerity of a father, the natural disinclination of youth to have all their inclinations (however uncensurable) subject to the constant superintendence of their seniors, and a variety of circumstances, which arise from the same sentiment or feeling, contribute greatly to their accepting invitations which promise to relieve them from the irksomeness of restraint, without their suspecting the real motive of the civility that so fatally misleads them.

They find at the Major's every thing that was promised. A hearty welcome to an elegant entertainment; the most expensive

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wines, of which they are allowed to drink as profusely or as sparingly as they choose; if they prefer water, no one asks them why; they are made to understand, that the removal of a part of the company to a play table in the next room, imposes no obligation on them to do the same, unless their voluntary inclination leads them there, and if when they are there they feel any reluctance either to play or bet, they are kept in countenance by others who *appear* to be as timid as themselves, and they may partake of this sort of thing in any way they like, and as often as they like, without witnessing indecorum or impropriety of any sort or kind.

Meeting there with others who *seem*, like themselves, to be strange to the party, and novices in the sports, a hint is given to them, if it does not originate in themselves, that they must give the Major a dinner at York-house or the Bear, and wherever that dinner is given the same facilities to mischief are provided.

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From the first moment of their stepping over the Major's threshold, their suffering to a less or greater degree becomes inevitable, without the intervention of some miracle. Even if they do suspect a trap they are in no better situation than the poor mouse who runs round and round the cage, without venturing to approach the bait for fear of some concealed danger, till at length, persuaded that the dread is groundless, and taking credit for precautions that are unequal to the magnitude of the risk, they make one step only beyond the line of safety, and find that step a fatal one.

If the first advance should not be destructive in its effects, they seldom stop there, for it is the same with gaming as with every other vice; security against the excess of it, is not to be reckoned upon, when once the outer limit is passed. The second degree of approach seems to be so very little more dangerous than the first, and the third so little more than the second, that we insensibly

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push forward with a rapidity we are incapable of calculating or of feeling, till an hasty arrival at the extreme of depravity makes us look back with as much surprise as remorse at the ruinous progress we have made.

Franks had been at Bath but a short time when the chief of a set he had attached himself to, announced the arrival of a pigeon of the first order.

The value of the prize made it an object to spare no pains in their preparation, and a plan laid with the most consummate art was carried into effect with all the address they could command.

The old rooks of the party who were well known to the world, stood quite aloof, and were not seen to mix with their accessaries; the second class, though but little suspected, were allowed only to act subordinate and concealed parts, and those only stood forward on this occasion who were new to the public eye.

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They soon contrived to insinuate themselves into his good graces, by warning him against such and such persons, as men to be avoided. The most notorious of the gang took now and then a conspicuous stand near him, and assiduously pressed themselves upon his attention, on purpose to give opportunity to their crafty partners for the exercise of their treachery.

The scheme succeeded. He had an itch for play, and not doubting but he was in safe hands, he played with the frankness of youth, and the carelessness of a man whose fortune was too great to make the money he staked at all an object to him. He won as often as he lost, and he was made to feel confident of being greatly superior to any of his antagonists in point of skill when the cards were not against him.

They were slow of progress in the conduct of their plot, because as the stroke they meditated was to be a grand one, they deemed

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it of no small consequence not to aim the blow till they had such a thorough knowledge of their man as to make it effectual when they did strike.

He had adopted a plan which they professed to adhere to, namely, never to play when he had drank a glass too much, and sometimes when they were sober, and he was a little gone, they would refuse to play with him, which encreased his confidence in their honour, at no loss to themselves; for they had experienced, that if he even did play under such circumstances, it was with an invincible resolution not to exceed a stake that was not worth their winning.

There was, however, a point at which he was ripe for any thing, and that was when he had taken just wine enough, as he thought, to quicken all his faculties, without in any degree repairing them, and when he felt himself in that state he was insensible to consequences. If he won, he generously

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insisted on proceeding, that those who had lost to him might have a chance of recovering at least a part of their loosings; if he lost, he was still more peremptory in requiring them to go on, because he had resolved never to rise from table the loser of more than a certain fixed sum.

They saw their way plainly; and taking a time when he had drank but little, though sufficient to give him every confidence in himself, they with considerable address made him the gradual loser of something more than the amount he had prescribed, and then commenced their grand attack.

They left it for him to propose, whilst they declined, doubling the stake every time; nor would they consent till he insisted upon it. Even then, as if sure thereby of being eventually no gainers, they stipulated that it should be for a few hundreds short of the gross amount, that they might not after such

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a run of luck, rise from table without winning something.

Being indulged in this point, the play was renewed with encreased ardour. The stake was doubled every time. He knew that the first turn in his favour was sure to reduce the immense amount it had arrived at to the five hundreds he had easily reconciled himself to pay; but alas, they took care that that first turn should not come to his relief, and he retired fifty thousand and five hundred pounds minus.

It was effected in so short a time, and concluded at so early an hour in the evening, that after congratulating each other on their splendid success, it was proposed, that the whole gang should be summoned together to be informed of the result, and to pour forth copious libations in honor of the tutelar goddess to whom they ascribed the boon.

Franks who was of the executive party,

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felt more joy than all the rest, because it was rendered more exquisite than theirs could be, by his honest anticipation of the defeat he had planned for them.

He was greatly alarmed on account of the state of mind in which the victim withdrew. He had given them an I. O. U. for the the amount, and pledged his honor to meet them the next morning for the purpose of executing bonds for so much as he could not make it convenient to pay down, or engage for, on notes of moderate date; but Franks saw so much desperation in his countenance, that he dreaded lest a more immediate act of despair might render his good intentions fruitless.

He therefore resolved on following the distracted youth directly, but to avoid suspicion, he vehemently opposed the request that one or two of the body urged to be excused from being of the nocturnal party, insistingthat on such an occasion as that,

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every thing should be made to give way, and that though he drank no wine himself, he would not be absent from the meeting, if the consequence of his attending them proved fatal to the greatest object of his life. They however all pleaded a convenience in separating whilst supper was getting ready; to which he made no objection, and the party broke up.

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CHAP. XXI.

FRANKS RESCUES LORD A—— FROM THE TALONS OF THE ROOKS, AND ACCOMPANIES HIM TO LONDON.—THEIR CONVERSATION.—FROM FRANKS'S DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF, HIS LORDSHIP DISCOVERS HIM TO BE A PERSON OF WHOM HE HAD BEFORE HEARD SOME VERY INTERESTING ACCOUNTS.

THE moment they were all gone, he flew to the unhappy youth's lodgings, where he found him to all appearance bereft of reason, the prey of violent and raging passions. He however administered a speedy relief. He told him in few words, that however incredible it might, and indeed must, appear to him, he has lost his money to a set of scroundrels, who had marked him for their prey before he had been in Bath twelve hours, and whose every movement from that moment to the present was concerted to accele-

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rate the accomplishment of the fraud which had that evening been so completely practised upon him.

"Scoundrels!" exclaimed his lordship. Franks replied, that it remained for him to determine to-morrow, whether one exception was not to be made, but that the risk he ran in staying with him then, denied to him the satisfaction he should otherwise derive from going into a more detailed explanation.

He informed the astonished youth, that there was one way and one way only, by which he might defeat the machinations of the infernal junto, of which he himself made one, for the sole purpose of defeating the diabolical scheme.

"When you meet us to-morrow agreeable to appointment, tell us with a manly and resolute air that you come prepared to fulfil your engagement, but that you insist on exacting one condition and one only. Remind

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us then, (which we all know very well) that your fortune is more than equal to double the sum you have lost, but as the loss you already stand under will oblige you to submit to a mortification and a penance which will not be at all aggravated by doubling its amount, you require of us one more instance of the liberality we have so often manifested, and assure yourself we will not refuse you one more chance.

"Explain that your desire is merely to cut a single card for the entire amount, in which the probability of success must be as much in our favour as yours, and that if you lose, you will instantly sign bonds for the gross sum of a hundred thousand pounds.

"They will greedily embrace the offer; they will have a pack at hand, apparently never opened, that affords you no chance, as the person (which ever of us it may be) who is to make the cut with you, will desire you to shuffle them, and, on the moment

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of your laying them down upon the table, will feel for a card something longer than any of the rest, which, if their fraud was not to be counteracted, would decide it against you directly; for in their prepared packs there are several low cards that project a little, though not so much as the one he will have lifted, and not to be perceptible to your touch, but still the projection is such as makes it impossible for you to cut any other than a low card.

"My mode of defeating them is a very simple one, but not more simple than certain. I shall be provided with another pack to substitute in the place of theirs, and the little address that is necessary to my doing that unperceived, will be greatly aided by the impossibility of their suspecting that one of the association could have any interest in such a conduct, equal to that he has in his fair proportion of so vast a booty.

"Cut with confidence, for with my pack

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you cannot lose, and having won, be prepared to lay down on the table the 500 l. which forms no part of the main sum, and retire with as much *sang froid* as you can command under such circumstances; have your carriage ready, and the moment you quit the room drive out of town.

"If by this conduct, I establish any claim to your favor, shew it by not subjecting me to the possible consequences of writing to me either by the post or otherwise. My plan will be to have done with the scoundrels for ever, and, perhaps, to take a formal leave of them the moment your back is turned. That, however, must depend on circumstances. My plea will be the annihilation of all confidence in a confederacy, subject by the obvious treachery of one or other of its members to such palpable frauds; for the pack will be examined directly, and the trick will be discovered, but the detection of the author will be utterly impossible."

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The hurry of Franks to retire obliged the young nobleman to be brief in the expressions of a gratitude that almost overcame him. He said he should drive directly to London, and professed to see nothing in Franks's plan of proceeding that should prevent their going together; for, added he, you must not wound my feelings so severely as to deny to me a speedy if not an immediate opportunity of proving that I am not wholly unworthy of such a service.

Franks, after a little consideration told him, that though there were reasons that would make a journey to London just then, by no means desirable to him, yet he did not know how to dispose of himself more satisfactorily for a little while, and it was accordingly agreed, that if no unforeseen impediment arose, they should leave Bath together.

They all met in the morning, and the business they met upon proceeded precisely in the way Franks had described, till it had

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got to the period of the youth's lifting his card.

His antagonist had already cut, and he had got his hand upon the remainder of the pack for the same purpose, when all of a sudden it occurred to him that Franks, still true to the gang, might possibly have betrayed him into double the loss.

As if impelled by some power or influence that was irresistible, to pause and reflect well on what he was doing, he shot so intelligible a glance of mistrust at the whole gang, as at the same time it marked the agonizing conflict he felt within himself, alarmed them not a little for his apparent ripeness to declare his conviction of a conspiracy, which, if he really did suspect before he saw his fate, they thought would inevitably burst forth the moment it was decided.

He caught a transient glance of Franks; he saw in his open and generous countenance

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such an indication of integrity, as completely reassured him; and exclaiming "'tis now too late to shrink!" threw up his card. The expression of their joint amazement at an event so contrary to their expectations, was not interrupted long by his presence; for closely following Franks's instructions, he laid his 500 l. on the table and retired.

Franks too was steady to the plan he had laid down for his own conduct, and had the satisfaction to perceive that whilst each suspected all the rest, no one of them seemed to suspect him.

With the most blasphemous oaths of being incapable of so dishonourable a fraud, they all endeavoured to persuade him not to go till some steps were taken to ascertain the villain by whom they were so grievously injured, but he put on a shew of indignation that was not to be softened, and resisting all their entreaties, left them to themselves to settle the distressing affair in any way they could.

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The situation of Franks's affairs at this period afforded him abundant cause for reflection, but the natural anxiety of Lord A. to know something of the man, who under such very extraordinary circumstances, had imposed upon him such a weight of obligation, did not then admit of it.

They were scarcely seated in the carriage when Lord A. addressed him as follows:

"I shall make no apology to you, sir, for the eagerness of my desire to be made acquainted with so much at least of your real condition of life, your habits, your views, and your connexions as will enable me to form some ideas of the precise way in which it will best become me to discharge the mighty debt of gratitude I have so happily contracted with you.

"If I were to judge of you from the society in which I found you, and the pursuit in which I have seen you engaged, it would

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not be possible for me to tolerate your company in my carriage for a moment; but when I consider that I should never have known their character or yours, if you had not made the disclosure; when I consider the sacrifice you made to rescue me from such enormous losses by an act which entailed so considerable a loss upon yourself, I become satisfied that your apparent way of life here, and the habits of those you associate with, do not form such a standard of conjecture respecting you as can tend to the forming a just opinion of your character.

"I am solicitous only about one thing, and that is, that I may not be deceived by you.

"I can easily conceive that a young man like you, who has had the virtuous courage to dissolve his bond with a knot of scoundrels at such a price, may have done it merely with a view of establishing such a claim on the person he so largely obliges, as

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to entitle him to a powerful and productive exertion in his favour; and where (as I readily admit it to be the case in the present instance) that influence and the means that person possesses, are likely to work out no ordinary recompence, the transaction, if viewed as a mere speculation to lay out his share of the winnings, to the best advantage, is not a bad one. At least it would not be grateful or right in me to say otherwise, and I have no hesitation in assuring you, that with perfect ease and convenience to myself and my friends, it is in my power to gratify your hopes to the extent of any expectations you may have formed on such a basis.

"The only rational conclusion I have been able to form in respect to your motives for such a conduct, is, that your youthful heart, naturally good perhaps, revolts at the villanies of your less corrigible coadjutors, and that a timely remorse having determined you to embrace the first favourable

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opportunity of doing it to advantage, you have availed yourself of this.

" Should that be the precise state of the case, I congratulate you heartily, for a more favourable opportunity could not have offered to you; but in order to make the opportunity fruitful to the full extent of its legitimate claims, it is indispensibly necessary that I should know a great deal more of you than I know of at present, and that your manner of communicating that knowledge should be such as may be best calculated to convince my understanding of the truth of what you impart.

" Deal ingenuously with me. Let not an ill-judged and an ill-timed reluctance to pronounce degrading truths, influence you to any concealments.

" If (as is probably, nay, I should suppose unavoidably the case) your associating with such abhorrent characters has made you take

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part in transactions which throw a man once for all beneath the level of honourable society, do not fasten upon me the disgrace, and upon yourself the consequent loss which must inevitably ensue, whenever I discover that you have not acted with the candour I now require of you."

Franks readily admitted the reasonableness of his lordship's conjectures, and the propriety of his sentiments; but said he, "I am already in possession of my reward. No exercise of the well-known influence of your family in my behalf; no application of the abundant means you possess will ever be called for. You can render me no service. If I actually stood in need of the generous returns you are so commendably disposed to make, I would rather seek them in any other quarter, than debase myself by vitiating an action, which would cease to afford me any pleasure, the moment it was suffered to be made the foundation of a benefit to myself.

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"I have rendered similar services to many, though not to so vast an amount; but you are the first to whom I ever made myself known as the author of the relief I have administered.

"You, like them, would have remained ignorant of me, if the peculiar circumstances of your case had not alarmed me for the consequences of any other than the most immediate, as well as the most unequivocal and convincing mode of proceeding.

"Various inducements now determine me to abandon a pursuit which I can have no motive for quitting reluctantly, but that which flows from my retirements depriving others of the good it enabled me to do in counteracting the destructive schemes of the villains I associated with.

"Our present conversation will be our last; and therefore the praise-worthy reason you urge for a frank communication on my

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part respecting myself, is of no force, and even if yielded to, could be of no avail.

"Keep your own secret, my lord, and if you wish to augment the happiness I derive from having served you, manifest it by never again placing yourself in a situation that will render a similar interference necessary to you."

"There is (said his lordship) one, from whom the secret must not be kept, and my impatience to unfold it to that one, makes me anxious to get to the end of our journey. It is a friend with whom I never had a secret yet, and whose uniform confidence in me would make it criminal on my part to withhold for a moment a secret of so much importance; one in the possible result of which his future happiness was not less involved than my own, and bearing, as the disclosure will do, the most convincing proof of my immoveable compliance with your last injunction, never to place myself in such a situ-

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ation again, the disclosure cannot fail to afford him the highest gratification and delight. It will be giving to the best of fathers an unequivocal proof, that his prodigal son will be a prodigal no more.

" Let me, however, conjure you, sir, to reflect on the painfulness of his situation as well as my own, if I were to suffer any argument, or any impediment that human endeavours or human ingenuity can overcome, to rob him as well as myself of the heart-felt pleasure of manifesting to the author of so providential an escape, the sense we entertain and the gratitude we feel. You cannot deny to me this gratification without subjecting me to the most humiliating apprehensions. It would be treating me like a worthless individual, who has been rescued from the hands of an assassin or any grievous calamity, by the benevolent and humane interference of a man, who disdains to receive acknowledgments of any kind from an impure and a base source, and therefore

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shuns the expressions of a gratitude that flows from a degenerate heart.

"If you have reasons for the concealments you meditate, I will not attempt to do a violence to your discretion, by seeking to know more of you than you choose voluntarily to disclose; but persuaded as I am that your mystery is that of an honorable mind, I cannot forego a claim which is founded on a principle of duty as well as gratitude; which forbids my relinquishing a friendship so dear to my heart, and which must ultimately be so creditable to me and my best connexions in life."

Their conversation proceeded in this strain till by degrees it begat in Franks a yielding disposition to comply, in part at least, with the wish of Lord A. to be better acquainted with him. He, however, could not reconcile to himself the idea of accepting such an introduction to a nobleman's family as he foresaw would take place, until he had un-

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veiled so much of his mystery as would enable his noble friend to account for the motive which originally led to his forming such detestable connexions.

He therefore gave him a faithful and a full account of every thing that had befallen him from his first meeting with Oakly on the verge of Hounslow-heath.

His description of the rencontre with Crawley, and every particular of the affair that led to it, naturally raised him very highly in his Lordship's estimation, and as at the conclusion of that account they were still some miles short of their journey's end, he resolved on disclosing some of the earlier events of his life. Accordingly, he related all the circumstances of the affair at the inn, at ———; of the part he had taken to aid the escape of the lady there; of his complete detection of the plot by a critical examination of the servants; and of the benevolent interference of the surgeon, on whose representa-

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tions to the lady's family he relied for rescuing her from those suspicions in their breasts, which he professed to deem it utterly impossible ever to eradicate from the public mind by any means whatever.

At the close of this story, Lord A. observed, that of course it had not occurred to him that he sat in Parliament as the representative of that identical borough; adding, that the surgeon was his staunch friend; that the inn was his father's property; that he always put up there, and of course knew the landlady, the chambermaid, and all the rest of the family.

He said he had heard all the circumstances related by the surgeon over and over again, almost verbatim as he had told them; the interesting nature of it having occasioned it to be asked for, whenever that gentleman made one of a company who were not acquainted with it.

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" The lady (said Lord A.) has never been heard of since. The chambermaid persists in her first account; has been from that day to this upheld and maintained at Bearcroft's expense, who encontres nothing but the abhorrence of mankind, and is said to derive his only consolation from the hope of still getting the lady within his power, and gratifying his revenge on her rescuer, whom he speaks of as the unquestionable possessor of her person.

" It is matter of no small regret to our friend the surgeon (said Lord A.) that he is unable to disprove that fact; but you may rest assured, that it is a point on which I feel no curiosity to be informed. A lady so cruelly driven away from the world as she was, certainly had strong claims to protection; and if she has accepted of it from so honorable a character as yourself, she is to be congratulated, let that man be whom he will."

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CHAP. XXII.

FRANKS WITHDRAWS ALTOGETHER FROM THE BLACKLEG FRATERNITY. HIS RECEPTION AT THE EARL OF C**********'S. THE TRIUMPH OF VIRTUE OVER VILLANY.

ON their arrival in town, Franks at his own desire was set down at an hotel, engaging to be at his Lordship's disposal the next day.

He lost no time in enquiring what progress Crawley had made towards recovery, and was not a little pleased to find that he was still smarting with his wounds, and that the fraternity had all concurred in pronouncing that he richly deserved the chastisement he had received.

The *ostensible* principle upon which these *very honourable* umpires decided the ques-

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tion, was, that Crawley had acted unlike a gentleman and a man of honor, in renewing the combat after Franks had generously abstained from taking his life when he stood so completely at his mercy after being disarmed. Another reason that would further have justified his availing himself to the utmost of the fair advantage he had gained, they said, was the indecorous behaviour of Crawley in drawing upon his guest whilst under his own roof.

The real motive, however, of their taking the part they did, was to prevent, if possible, the desertion of so valuable a confederate, and to that end, they no sooner heard of his being returned to town, than they waited upon him with an apology from Crawley, and a hope that his misconduct would not deprive them of his friendship.

He told them his stay in town would probably be very short, but of this they might rest assured, that he would never espouse

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any interest at a play table but theirs, or ever attach himself to any other association of their stamp, and there the matter ended.

Nothing could be more highly gratifying to Franks than the reception he met with from the Earl of C********, on being introduced to him by his son.

" Sir (said the old peer), you have extracted from my bosom the only thorn that rankled there. My dear boy had but one disease, and you have cured him of it. It was fatal in its nature, and in frequent contemplations of its possible effect, it caused me a great deal of anguish. He had so much confidence in his own prudence and temper, that the sage admonitions of a doating father were deemed fruitless precautions against an evil that so much fortitude and self-denial as my son thought he possessed, rendered, in his opinion, unnecessary. He has, however, seen his error, and happily for

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him, as well as for me, the fatal, the ruinous effects of his conviction have been averted by your providential intervention. The tranquillity and repose of my remaining days will be sweetened by a confidence in his rectitude, which you alone are the author of. To-day, sir, we kill the fatted calf. I never thought Lord A. the prodigal which you have made him confess himself to be, but you have brought him back to himself and to me with a repentance that is the best security against a future relapse, and he shall celebrate the event in the bosom of a family, whose hearts, sir, will unite in one common feeling of gratitude to you their common benefactor."

Lord A. had a brother, then abroad, and three sisters, all fine girls, and highly accomplished. His mother was the counterpart of her husband, for that gaiety of heart, benevolence of disposition, and sweetness of manners, which makes valuable every moment spent in their delightful society.

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They all partook of the old gentleman's emotions, which, after the cloth was removed and a few cheerful glasses had gone round, he was unable to restrain.

With tears of joy he pressed to his bosom the man whom he hailed as the author of so much future happiness to his family; he made his daughters embrace him as another brother, and piously enjoined them to let him have a constant place as such in their affections and their prayers.

Before they separated, it was settled that Franks should be of their party to a concert the next evening, which was to be given by a friend of theirs on an extraordinary occasion.

After the concert, supper rooms were thrown open, and it was not till a late hour that the company began to go away. Some strange gentlemen, who appeared to have been drinking too much wine, created a dis-

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turbance as they went by the door, by insisting on being carried home in some of the hackney-chairs that were retained by the company, and irritated by the firmness of the chairmen's refusal, they began to be very troublesome.

The uproar had scarcely subsided when Franks, and the party he attended, reached the hall, in the way to their carriages. Lord A. and Franks first conducted the old lady, followed by the peer leading one of his daughters. The young lord and Franks then stept back for the other two young ladies, whom they handed into the coach, which immediately drove off.

They then retired for a moment into the hall whilst Lord A.'s chariot drew up, observing at the same time, that the authors of the disturbance, who had behaved rather impertinently as the ladies passed along, seemed to have acquired some fresh spur to their rudeness; for one of them exclaimed,

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" 'tis he by the living G—d!" another vociferated " then if you let this opportunity slip, you ought to be d——d;" to which the first replied still more vehemently, " may I be d——d to eternal perdition if I do," and instantly presenting himself to Franks in the hall, cried out " 'tis Bearcroft! you villain! draw! draw scoundrel and take your deserts from the hands of the man you have injured so much, and shrunk from so long like a coward as you are."

The turbulent interference of the monster's associates rendered fruitless Lord A.'s struggles to prevent a rencontre, but they produced one good effect; for whilst they were engaged in keeping his Lordship away, they were unable to give that unfair assistance to their hero which they might have been very likely to do, if not otherwise employed.

Fortunately for Franks there was ample space and no crowd. In parrying a very few

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thrusts he discovered that his opponent was a very unskilful one. The force of his parry to the first feint in tierce, destroyed his guard, and exposed him to a thrust *en segoon* which passed through his body. Recovering again as quick as thought, Franks, full of confidence, repeated his thrusts, and after two pinks in the sword arm, he beat down his guard, throwing in cart over arm which entered his right breast and pierced through his left side just below the shoulder blade.

On this he fell to the ground, and Franks temperately, but most feelingly, addressing himself to the by-standers, said. "Mark my words. If I have killed this man, I have done an act for which I merit the thanks of this world, and for which I shall be called to no account in the world to come. My regret is that he had not finished his career of infamy and quitted this life three years ago; if he had, the injured lady whom he attempted to possess by brutal force, and in whose cause I am a champion, would not

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have been branded as she has been by him for a prostitute, whilst her conduct to this hour has been as correct, her person as unpolluted, and her chastity as pure as that of any the most virtuous of her sex. My cause is the cause of every man of honor, and ill befal the wretch on whom his God has given the external stamp of the human character, who would not, like me, vindicate, at the hazard of his life, the fair claims of innocence to an honest fame." He then laid hold of Lord A.'s arm, and retired unmolested.

This event could not raise him higher in the estimation of Lord A.'s family, for he had already engaged their affections, and occupied a well-earned station in all their hearts.

Their tears flowed plentiously; but they were tears of joy for a brother's safety. They hung upon him as they would upon a sister who had been miraculously snatched from a

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falling house in flames, or saved from the wreck of a foundered ship. The girls saw in him the gallant vindicator of their sexes' honor; the old peer viewed him as the model on which he would have his own son form himself; and the generous sensibility of the venerable countess yielded to the interesting idea of a darling daughter of her own being in such a situation as her whom Franks had fought for, and she pressed him to her bosom as the hero under whose especial protection she would most confidently rely for such a safeguard. Their emotions flowed too immediately from the heart to be capable of a speedy check, and the sweetness of the sympathy they indulged was too exquisite to admit of a hasty subsidence.

It required but little consideration to determine on the proper course to be pursued. If the villain's wounds proved mortal, to vindicate at the awful bar of justice such a conduct as Franks', under such circumstances, would be to stand in a situation that all

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honourable men would envy. It would be to receive from a British jury of fathers, brothers, and lovers, not merely an acquittal from a charge of having violated the laws, but a grateful expression of their feeling for his sufferings in the cause of female innocence and insulted virtue.

As, however, the forms of a judicial proceeding would necessarily subject him to very disagreeable restraints before the day of trial, if they were not avoided, it was settled that he should leave town directly, and retire with Lord A. to a safe asylum on one of the earl's estates in a remote part of the kingdom.

The moment of his departure gave a new spring to the finer feelings of their susceptible hearts, and they looked to the period of his return to their arms again, as a fond mother does to the recovery of the child that is forcibly torn from her bosom.

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The wretch, however, survived, and thereby deprived Franks of the happiness he had promised himself, in throwing aside his disguise, and taking an orphan's asylum in the bosom of this amiable family.

He never could contemplate the idea of Barbara Markham being known to live, during Bearcroft's existence, without coupling with it the dread of what that monster's diabolical spirit might do to accomplish that for which he had suffered so much.

Unawed by the reproaches of this world, and regardless of any ignominious means by which he might be hurried out of it, poor Franks felt no security even in the certainty which Bearcroft himself might foresee of his speedy expiation of a lustful crime on the gallows.

It was in Franks's mind a maxim unalterable, that safety from the villain's approaches could only be relied on so long as he pre-

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served his disguise, and for that reason he resolved to keep his secret even from the knowledge of those to whom his happiness was as dear as their own.

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CHAP. XXIII.

THE FATAL TEMERITY OF A SCOUNDREL EXEMPLIFIED IN BEARCROFT'S LAST EFFORT, AND THE EFFECTUAL INTERFERENCE OF PROVIDENCE MANIFESTED IN HIS ULTIMATE DISCOMFITURE.

THE disgrace and the anguish which Bearcroft had sustained in consequence of the glorious triumph of virtue over villany, served only to set him upon new schemes of revenge, and he hoped by the assistance of his hellish accomplices, to make the criminal law of the country a medium for the accomplishment of his purpose.

To that end he sometime after his recovery, caused an indictment to be preferred against Franks, at the instance of a young prostitute he had bribed for the purpose,

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charging him with having committed a rape upon her person.

The bill being found, as a matter of course, on the strength of the *ex parte* evidence heard by the grand jury, Franks was taken into custody.

When the trial came on, Bearcroft, (lest his accomplices should hesitate to speak with sufficient decision) appeared himself as one of the witnesses in support of the prosecution. It was a leading feature of his horrid character to dread no consequences that might befal himself in the pursuit of a darling scheme to effect the ruin of another.

He had great dependence on the effrontery with which his chief witness and old accomplice, Betty chambermaid, was prepared to give evidence in corroboration of the fact; but not satisfied that her testimony had gone quite far enough to render the

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conviction of the prisoner certain, he boldly presented himself for examination.

The moment Franks saw the ground he was prepared to take, he desired his counsel to devote all their attention, to exert all their ingenuity, and to give scope to all their energy in cross-questioning him.

This advice was strictly followed; they pressed him closely, and he did not scruple to declare, and to repeat over and over again upon his oath, that he was in the adjoining room; that the cries of the poor girl awoke him from a sound sleep; that he heard Franks threaten her with instant death if she did not yield to his embraces, and that his bursting open the door was so instantaneous as to admit of his being *an occular witness to the perfect accomplishment of the crime.*

The moment his evidence was concluded, Franks handed to his counsel a note which

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he had prepared in the mean time, stating, that it might be proper to take some steps to prevent Bearcroft's making his escape, which he probably would attempt when he should learn an important fact which now could no longer be concealed, namely, that the alledged ravisher was a woman.

The note was secretly put into the hands of the judge; a proper watch was set upon Bearcroft; the proceedings were suspended; a jury of matrons was formed; they retired with the prisoner, and their verdict on the question of the ravisher's sex was decisive.

It acquitted the prisoner; condemned Franks to death; restored Barbara Markham to life, and consigned Bearcroft to infamy and the punishment he deserved. So wilful and so vile a perjury, connected as it was with all its concomitant aggravations, (for the whole of his villanies were now laid open) called for all the vengeance of the

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laws. His trial soon took place, and his sentence was to stand in the public pillory, with Betty chambermaid on his right-hand, and the suborned prostitute on his left, after which he was to be transported.

And thus was the profligate requited!

The virtuous indignation of the populace was manifested with so much severity towards him particularly, and the features of his face were so completely beaten into one coagulated mass, by showers of rotten eggs and various hard substances concealed by external coats of filth, as to render it improbable that his countenance would ever again be so far restored to its former semblance as to expose to view in his original likeness, the most atrocious miscreant that ever smarted under the lash of justice.

The veil thus torn away, the heroine of our eventful tale appeared before her friends in her own character—the injured, suffer-

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ing, virtuous Barbara Markham. Not less a pattern of unexampled fortitude to her own sex, than of courage, integrity, and strict honor to ours; the protector of innocence, and the scourge of knaves; a blessing to parents, and a monitor to youth; exhibiting an enviable example of firmness under the severest trials; a patient reliance on the timely intervention of that Providence which never deserts the innocent in its hour of utmost need, and a rare instance of the generous exertions of which the fair sex are capable, when their genius, instead of being restrained by the arbitrary shackles of custom, is left to pursue its own bent, to accommodate itself to circumstances as they arise, and to take a bias from the dictates of that reason which we vain lords of the creation arrogate to our dear selves, and to which we too often profess to think our lovely associates can assert but a very feeble claim.

Lord A.'s sisters soon equipped her pro-

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perly in female attire. She welcomed the congratulations of her friends in the character she received from the hands of nature, and in which she was seen to an infinitely greater advantage in all respects than in that which she had assumed; but nothing surprised them so much as the change in her voice. Her natural charms, which were of the first order, had derived no small advantage from her commerce with the world; it had enabled her to subdue entirely the *mauvaise honte* which is so great a drawback upon the manners of our lovely countrywomen; and the female address which she so much admired upon the continent, but could not imitate with any tolerable success before, sat now upon her with all the ease of nature.

Her fair companions were very elegant women, but her superiority was decided. Her well sustained confidence in that superiority, commanded an encrease of their admiration, without any diminution of their

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regard, and they were infinitely delighted with the discovery that had taken place, because it enabled them to cultivate more nearly the affections of one so dear to their hearts, but whose supposed sex had imposed restraints upon the manifestation of their partiality, which were now entirely done away.

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CHAP. XXIV.

IN WHICH, HAVING ALREADY PUNISHED THE GUILTY, THE AUTHOR AIMS TO DO EQUAL JUSTICE TO THE INNOCENT AND DESERVING.

THOUGH, for reasons already assigned, Barbara had carefully avoided any communications with her family, she nevertheless had sought frequent opportunities of ascertaining how they went on.

The domestic establishment to which they had retired on her father's quitting London, was broke up when he died, and her mother and sister had ever since lived very comfortably with her aunt.

The publicity of her discovery, and Bearcroft's disgrace, did away the possibility, as

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well as the necessity of her remaining any longer in a state of concealment, in respect to them, and she lost no time in waiting upon them.

She was accompanied by her fair associates, in the countess's coach, and in addition to the liveliest demonstrations of joy on the part of her mother and sister, the sight of a coronet and splendid equipage, and the warmth of affection with which the young ladies assured them that though she was again restored to herself, she should know no home but theirs, begat a degree of kindness in her old aunt that she never displayed before.

They had it in charge from their father and mother, not to return without fixing a day for the coach to fetch Barbara's mother, sister, and aunt to dine, and after that point was arranged, they retired, highly gratified with the reception they had met with, and the general result of their visit.

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Barbara, however, did not carry back with her quite such good spirits as she took there. A short conversation with her sister had filled her with depressing reflections on poor Charles Fortescue's account. He had kept up a constant correspondence with Miss Markham ever since his arrival in the West Indies, which Barbara brought away with her.

Miss M. had made him acquainted with every thing that happened in the family about the time of his departure, and his irresistible entreaties had at length prevailed on her to communicate to him every thing that she knew respecting Barbara.

He no sooner learnt that her heart was free, than he derived a motive from her loss of fortune to declare a passion that he had not the courage to make known before; but, alas! the object of his love remained ignorant of the excess of his sufferings for her, and the tone of his epistles for some time back, bespoke a mixture of melancholy and

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despair that drew from Barbara's bright eyes the first tears that had bedewed her cheeks for a long while.

The manly terms in which he spoke his indignation, and his determined revenge on the arch-villain Bearcroft; the honest confidence with which he professed himself ready to vindicate her fame against any authority that may have pronounced unfavourably of her; the anxiety with which he sought to obtain at the altar a hand which he proudly asserted would not be the less acceptable to him, if spurned by a host of credulous, short sighted, narrow minded fools, who become the dupes of false rumours at the expense of a life of happiness they might otherwise derive from a well-merited confidence in the virtue and purity of the sex, altogether affected her extremely.

The wailings of Dido for her Eneas, Ariadne for her Theseus, or Andromache for her Hector, were not more impassioned than

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than were those of the broken-hearted, distracted Fortescue for the loss of his Barbara. He had not merely to lament her loss to him, but her entire loss to the world, and he regretted the length of her concealment the more, because, not knowing all the circumstances of the case, it was his uniform opinion that the most effectual way to silence the slander and confound the calumniator was for her to meet both with the irresistible force of conscious innocence, in the face of the world.

With all her respect for his opinions, she did not subscribe to the dictates of his judgment in this instance, assuring herself that a thorough knowledge of the subject and of the wretch she had to deal with, would insure to the plan she adopted his unqualified approbation.

In all trying situations, her first and her deepest regret was the absence of her dear Fortescue. Her heart had always yearned

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towards him with a feeling that had never manifested itself for any other man, but the shyness of her delicate mind had prevented her analyzing the subject sufficiently to ascertain the real source from which her own emotion flowed, as well as his, and as he had not become a declared suitor, she never dreamt of giving that heart a place upon her list of lovers which ought to have superceded all the rest.

Now, alas! when it was probably too late, her eyes were opened to a just view of their relative situations. Memory supplied her with a faithful recapitulation of all that passed between them at their last parting. In what he then said she now found abundant proof of the ardency of his love, but infinitely more in other demonstrations, which, though silent, were most expressive, and left her no excuse for a blindness and stupidity for which she should never be able to forgive herself.

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When the day arrived that was fixed for the entertainment of the family party, their joy was unexpectedly heightened by the arrival of the earl's second son.

He had been abroad three years, and obtained permission to accompany the major of the regiment to England, whose return was rendered indispensibly necessary to the adjustment of some private concerns.

"We landed in Torbay (said the youth), and have travelled post up to town. The major (with no small reluctance I believe), has been prevailed on to postpone till tomorrow the commencement of some important enquiries relating to the business that brings him over, and I shall have the honor to introduce him as soon as he has somewhat adjusted his dress. Take care of your hearts, ladies, or rather prepare your nets, for in addition to his being one of the handsomest, finest fellow that ever wore a cockade, his bravery, generosity, and high

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sense of honor have made him the model on which our sex strive to form themselves; whilst he commands the admiration of yours wherever he is seen.

"The constancy of his attachment to some lady he left behind him, seems, however, to have blinded him to the charms of all the rest of the sex; for his attentions in the western world to the loveliest women in the creation, have never been known to exceed the bounds of mere common-place politeness."

One of the ladies asked if he was rich.

"Oh yes," replied the young soldier, "very rich. His good qualities caused him to be selected as the bosom friend of a young officer who became possessed of immense property by the will of a natural father, and who died of the yellow fever a few hours only after he had bequeathed every thing he possessed to the major."

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A knock at the street-door drew the narrator from his chair. He exclaimed over the bannisters, "Ah, my dear major! come up;" and the next moment he returned, introducing——Charles Fortescue!

It would be as superfluous to go into a detail of the scene which ensued, or the catastrophe it led to, as it would be to describe the natural consequence of a fond couple plighting their faith upon the altar; besides, the fruitful imagination of our fair readers will give to the one subject as they would to the other, so much richer a colouring, and the exuberance of their youthful fancy (which seldom fades even with their years) will be so lavish in the use of tints with which we dare not venture to embellish our canvas, that we conceive it will be more advantageous to the picture we exhibit, if we here lay our pencil down, and leave the finishing touch to their more luxuriant taste.

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As, however, the depth of shade which distinguishes one of the most prominent figures in the groupe, may subject us to the charge of having outraged nature in order to produce a strong effect, it becomes us to keep the composition on the eisel a few moments longer, to account for the having given to so montrous a creation as Bearcroft, the external semblance of "man's fair proportion."

That such monsters do exist will not be denied, and if fear of the laws and dread of the world's detestation did not restrain them, the human character would be more frequently degraded by their enormities; but such an excess of depravity is never attained to, except innate vice is cherished instead of being repressed, and matured instead of being destroyed, by mismanagement in early life.

Bearcroft's propensity to wickedness was

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manifested in numerous instances whilst he was a school-boy; but his father laid the fatal foundation of all his future excesses, by forbidding the application of that wholesome severity which might have effected an early reformation.

Unrestrained in his pursuits, his will was his only law. He was dismissed from different schools as too dangerous an example to others, and too likely to become still more so for want of that chastisement which his father would not permit.

His ill habits encreased with his years, and before he had passed his third term at the university he was rusticated. From that period he had nothing to attend to but his pleasures, which were all of the grossest and most sensual kind. Whilst yet a boy, he forced his way amongst the worst societies of men, and before he reached the years of maturity he was hacknied in every species of debauchery.

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That such a youth, so brought up, should in more advanced life produce such a man as Bearcroft, is rather to be expected than wondered at; and we have purposely reserved this explanation for our concluding page, in the hope that it may make its just impression, and warn those parents especially whose children manifest early propensities to wickedness, against the fatal effects of an ill-judged tenderness. To withhold necessary correction is to encourage vices, which being so fostered, attain by degrees an irresistible ascendency, and subject their victim to the loathing, detestation, and aborrence of mankind.

THE END.

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